

# ANIMATION WORLD

July 1996

• MAGAZINE •

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## *Champions of Animation*

Frédéric Back

John Coates and TVC

Quirino Cristiani

## *Remembering the Olympiad of Animation*



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# EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

## Champions of Animation

The 1984 Olympiad of Animation, which is commemorated in my interview with Fini Littlejohn, featured a selection of what were billed as the greatest animated films of all time, appropriately termed the "Champions of Animation." We like to think that *Animation World Magazine* is an ongoing celebration of animation champions—whether it be filmmakers, films or even studios.

Prominent among this month's champions is Frédéric Back, whose superbly hand crafted films such as *Crac!* have mesmerized a whole generation.

William Moritz took advantage of his recent visit to the Los

Angeles area to chat with him. The results are found in "The Mighty Animator: Frédéric Back."

TVC, founded by the late George Dunning, has always been one of the mainstays of the British animation industry, producing such landmarks as *Yellow Submarine*, *Snowman* and *When the Wind Blows*. The announcement that studio head John Coates will be closing the company next year, has led Jill McGreal to examine the company's and Coates' legacy in "TVC, 1957-1997."

"Quirino Cristiani, The Untold Story of Argentina's Pioneer Animator," by Giannalberto Bendazzi, tells the fascinating and long forgotten story of the trailblazing director who made the first two animated features, and the first one with sound. Interestingly enough, Cristiani had the quaint notion that feature animation is a medium for political satire, rather

than fairy tales. Then, again, pioneers sometimes don't know any better!

Rita Street's "Sue Loughlin: An Animator's Profile" examines the career and work of an animator

whose interest in

social issues is

reflected in

her recent

public

service

announcement for Amnesty International (and even her Levi's commercial), seems an appropriate choice for this issue which plays homage to the Olympic Spirit of international cooperation.

Once upon a time, Robert Breer (*A Man with his Dog Out for Air*, etc.) was one of a handful of American animators that would constantly show up at screenings of experimental films. The recent explosion of the animation scene has seemed to left Breer behind, but not really, as Jackie Leger points out in her

article, "Robert Breer: Animator."

For our formal tribute to the Olympics, I would like to point to my article, "The Olympiad of Animation: An Interview with Fini Littlejohn." Fini, whose friendship I have long valued, was the moving force behind the now fabled pocket animation festival that was one of the gems of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival.

For what's going on, animation-wise, in the current Olympic games, check out Mark Segall's "Animation at the Olympics," which details the efforts of Art Culture and Technology (ACT) to bring animation to the Olympic masses. Then, Frankie Kowalski, in her "The Great Adventures of Izzy—An Olympic Hero for Kids," looks at Hollywood's most recent animated exploration of what the Olympics are all about.

In "So, What Was It Like?" *The Other Side Of Animation's Golden Age*, union leader and animator Tom Sito takes a hard look at some of the myths and shibboleths of America's animation industry vis-à-vis the people and studios responsible for the classic era of Hollywood cartoons.

Howard Beckerman provides a meditation on the credibility factor in character design and development in his "When The Bunny Speaks, I Listen." Meanwhile, Pam Schechter, in "No Matter What, Garfield





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Speaks Your Language," explores the growing market for licensing and merchandising opportunities for cartoon characters, and how studios and vendors try to exploit the situation.

In our first festival round up, Bob Swain took advantage of the latest (noncompetitive) Cardiff Festival to bring us up-to-date on some of the latest developments in animation technology, as well as what's going on in some of the top European studios. On the other hand, Maureen Furniss takes a leisurely look at the pleasures of Zagreb 96, highlighting the prize winners and the festival's innovative use of the Internet.

Finally, William Moritz gives his considered (and at times argumentative) opinions on Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise's latest feature effort, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, while Frankie Kowalski's Desert Island series provides a peek at some top ten picks from four filmmakers whose works graced the 1984 Olympiad of Animation.

**Letters to the Editor**

Being an editor of an Internet magazine can sometimes be a lonely thing. Somehow, hit reports don't quite have the same sex appeal as seeing people actually looking at your journal at the local newsstand (and even plunking down a few dollars to buy it). But like print journals, one of the ultimate compliments is getting those letters to the editor, which can often make all

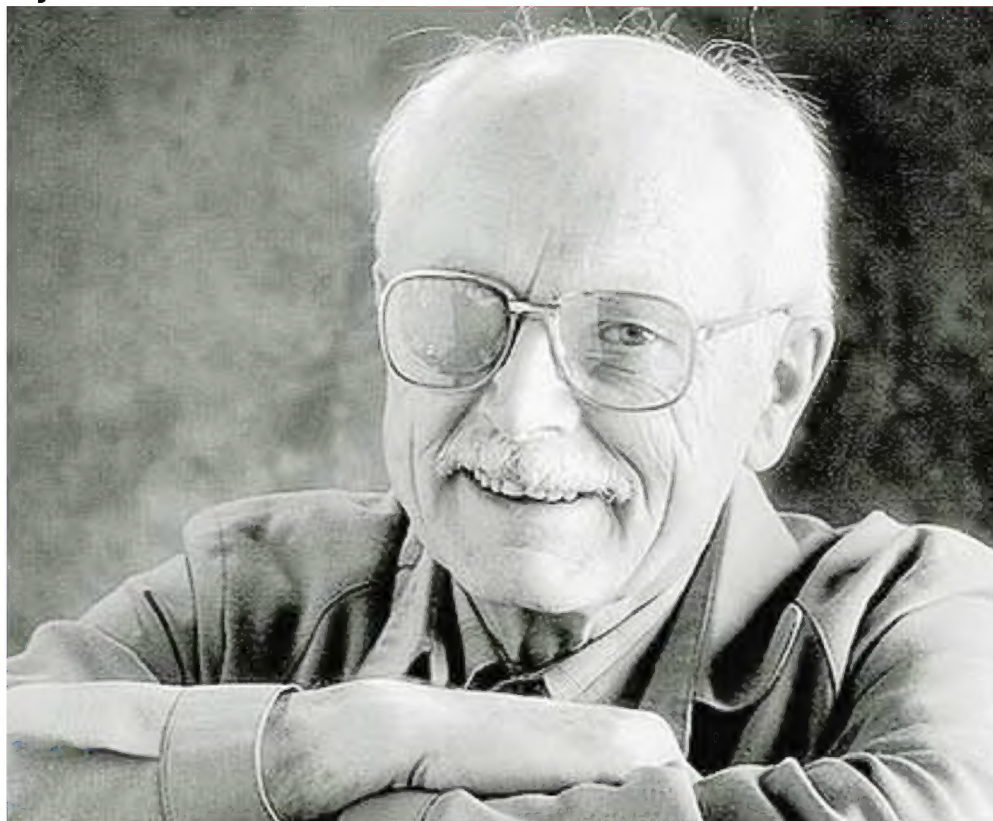
the effort that goes into something like *Animation World Magazine* very much worthwhile.

Thus, I would like to invite you to take some time to email (or even write us) about your thoughts about what appears in these "pages" (or think should appear), which we will start gathering and publish in a regular "Letters to the Editor" section starting next month. (Or, if you feel more comfortable, feel free to make your thoughts known on the Discussion Forum on the Animation World Network.)

— Harvey Deneroff  
editor@awn.com

# The Mighty Animator: Frédéric Back

by William Moritz



**Frédéric Back**

© SRC

**S**eventy-two-year-old Frédéric Back, two time Academy Award winner for *Crac!* and *The Man Who Planted Trees*, was recently in Los Angeles for the

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Artistic creation is always taking a risk; you can't guarantee how it will come out, there's no safety in art.

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opening of an exhibition of his animation drawings at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The exhibition, with art work from nine of his films, will run until August 25, although the panels of *The Man Who Planted Trees* and *The Mighty River* will be sent to the Hiroshima Film Festival after August 11. I got a chance to ask Mr. Back a few questions just before the opening night reception.

**Moritz:** Do all your animation films, from *Abracadabra* in 1970 until *The Mighty River* in 1993 belong to the Société Radio Canada [the French language division of the CBC]?

**Back:** Yes, that's right. I was an employee of Radio Canada—sometimes a free-lance, because depending on how interesting I found the work, sometimes I'd quit, and then return at a later date.

**Moritz:** Now they've closed down the animation section of Radio Canada ...

**Back:** Yes. And it's too bad. Hubert Tison at Radio Canada really gave me the opportunity to work in good conditions. Before that, I wasn't so interested in animation. The National Film Board was doing lots of fine animation, but no other place had good equipment and professional cameramen that could do that kind of work. Then Tison built up a professional animation studio at Radio Canada.

I had made many short pieces of animation for music broadcasts



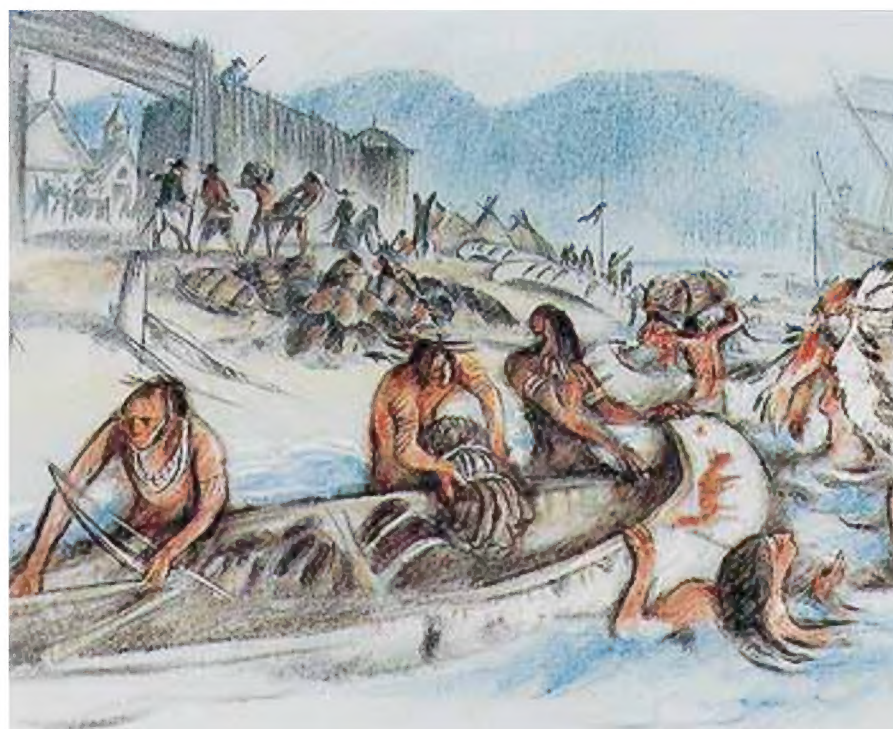
and documentaries, so when I began with Radio Canada, I made mainly short films. But the improved conditions Tison offered meant a more complex, higher standard of animation, and I gradually learned to make better, more complex films.

One of the good ideas Tison proposed to Radio Canada was an international exchange of animation films. Before that, and still now, there are regular exchanges of usual live-action television programs, but nothing with animation until Tison initiated it. It was very important, because it meant you could produce high-quality animations relatively cheaply, since for each film Radio Canada made, they got an additional 20 or more—one from each of the other participating countries.

This exchange functioned for about 15 years, and it only stopped because gradually too many people too often would buy poor, cheap animation films just to have something to exchange, and the countries that worked hard for higher quality were disappointed. It was really too bad it stopped, since it gave work to animators in many countries, as well as Canada, and encouraged the production of short films.

**Moritz:** Is Hubert Tison still with Radio Canada?

**Back:** No, he retired. After the animation department was gone, I quit, and there was nothing really to interest Hubert. Closing down animation was such a waste. The wonderful computer-assisted camera, which allowed me to make so many camera movements, rotations and dissolves for



**The Mighty River**  
© SRC

*The Mighty River* (so that it seemed spacious, multiplane and flowing like the river), I was the only person who ever got to use it. Where is it now?

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“Draw everything,” he told us, “it will all disappear.” He was right.

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**Moritz:** At the same time, the National Film Board was also being cut back.

**Back:** Unfortunately, yes. The problem today is that there are no more artists and thinkers at the head of organizations, only bureaucrats who make notes and count numbers. They have no ideas to offer. They don't take risks—and artistic creation is always taking a risk; you can't guarantee how it will come out, there's no safety in art. And the bureaucrats actually don't even seem to be able to count numbers very well,

because after Radio Canada dropped the animation department, I learned that more than half of the money that comes back to Radio Canada from sales of product comes from animation films, which are actually few in number: I made 9, Paul Driessen made 3, Graeme Ross made 2—that means 15 or so animation films gave as much income to Radio Canada as hundreds of hours of regular live-action programs. And the animation films also won hundreds of prizes at film festivals.

**Moritz:** One terrifying thought to me is that since the same Radio Canada which closed down the Animation Department owns your films, they could presumably withdraw them from circulation, not show them, they could be lost, decay in the vaults.

**Back:** Well, at least now they show them quite a bit, especially at





The Man Who Planted Trees

© SRC

fesitvals, where they are in demand. And *Man Who Planted Trees* and *Mighty River* are available on videocassette, so they are used by teachers and environmentalists continually.

**Moritz:** But even now, your earlier films, like the two based on Algonquin and Micmac myths, are hardly seen—though the artworks from them in this exhibit are very beautiful. In any case, does the demise of Radio Canada and the crippled National Film Board mean that you can't make any more animation?

**Back:** No, actually I could. I have had several proposals, even one from National Film Board, but I promised my wife Ghylaine not to take on another large animation project, because she became a sort of animation widow during the long making of *Man Who Planted Trees* and *Mighty River*. Now I

have actually started animation work on a 10 minute film sponsored by Trees for Life, in

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In the book there are many details and facts that you can study at leisure, and learn, perhaps intellectually, as you learn emotionally from the film.

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Wichita, Kansas, which will promote planting fruit trees in third world countries. Also, I never really stop working. Right after *Mighty River* I made a number of book illustrations, one about Inuits, one about beluga whales, and of course *The Mighty River* book itself. And I worked a lot with Greenpeace, and other organizations that protect animals, seals. There's always a lot of work to do.

**Moritz:** After spending so much

time making your filmed images move and change, do you mind seeing them as still book illustrations?

**Back:** No, I think they work very well as books, and I always make some special artworks just for the books. *Mighty River* is particularly important as a book, because in 24 minutes you can't give too many facts, since the visual information is so rich, you would get dizzy if there were statistics, too. But in the book there are many details and facts that you can study at leisure, and learn, perhaps intellectually, as you learn emotionally from the film. *The Mighty River* book has been translated into Japanese, as well, so I hope the Japanese fishing fleet read it and disappear.

**Moritz:** Surprisingly, even *Crac!* worked very well as a book, I thought. One of the things that I



liked most in Crac! the film was the way great Canadian paintings—Cornelius Krieghoff's *Merrymaking* or Lucius O'Brien's *Sunrise on the Saguenay*, for example—just seem to “happen” in the course of the action. When the ASIFA-Canada Bulletin devoted an issue to you in 1988, they printed a picture of your early art teacher, Mathurin Méheut, with his class (including you)—and a few of his sketches. He seems like such a romantic figure, you should make a film about him in which his paintings could also “just happen” in the course, since he is almost unknown here.

**Back:** Not a bad idea. He's getting better known in France: there's a museum devoted to him, and traveling exhibitions. When he died, his wife gave some 4,000 drawings to start the museum. His work is a rich documentation of something that no longer exists. During the war, when I was studying with him, Brittany was almost untouched, following its typical way of life for centuries. I had the opportunity to go with him and make drawings beside him. “Draw everything,” he told us, “it will all disappear.” He was right. Now in Brittany, there is hardly a port. No Bretons in traditional costume, no fishermen, no fish. No colorful nets of string and rope, no iron and wood tools and boats: everything is plastic. It's lost all its character and beauty. The Breton fishermen used to dress all in red or blue, and they would repair their clothes with patches from other material so they were like mosaics of colors, walking paintings. What Méheut drew is a fantastic testimony, a documentation of this lost world.

In France there is now a book about him, and I was interviewed by the director of a television documentary about him, but the program was not really very good, as they did not have enough money to give the full impression of the scope and color of Méheut's achievement. That's where I, too, would have trouble with such a project: I'm not a good enough diplomat, a negotiator to make a deal to support a project on Méheut, as it would be another big film.

**Moritz:** That's where we miss Hubert Tison.

**Back:** Yes indeed. I would have the idea, and he would make it possible. My wife was also enormously supportive and helpful—too few animators have such a good, understanding helper.

**Moritz:** Are any of your children animators?

**Back:** No, but in a way, they are all involved with art. My daughter is a painter, and she also works with batiks. My younger son is an illustrator, who specializes in historical costumes and settings. And my older son is a biologist who worked for the World Health Organization, for 10 years he was in Africa, and he teaches using his knowledge of graphics, including computer graphics: he's very clever with computers.

I'm very honored and happy that the Academy is making this exhibition. Radio Canada framed all these artworks, and then they have been sitting around in a cellar.

I hope this exhibition is a

success, not just for me, but because there are so many animators around the world who do fine artwork that should be exhibited, too. What you see on the screen is not a reflection of each individual drawing or sculpture, so it's wonderful to have a chance to see the artworks, and it can be very instructive to other artists.

When you're in your little room by yourself drawing, it can be depressing: it's so repetitive, and you never know, drawing after drawing, what will happen when they get on film; you just have to have faith in your project, and keep on. An exhibition like this should be a stimulation to work hard, and keep steadfast in your belief in the project, and give each artwork maximum quality.

*William Mortiz teaches film and animation history at the California Institute of the Arts.*



# TVC, 1957-1997

by Jill McGreal



**Wind in the Willows**  
Courtesy of TVC London

There are moments in *The Wind in the Willows*, TVC's feature-length animated adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's Edwardian children's book, in which the romance with the land, that very English phenomenon, is intense and magical. After Mole and Rat rescue Portly, the young otter who has wandered too far downstream, they all return home by boat. When dawn breaks the landscape is suffused with a "silvery, climbing phosphorescence" as the mists lift and another day on the river begins. To capture this—the essence, of Grahame's book—requires a special mind-set, a certain kind of understanding, a carefully guided team ...

John Coates, Managing

Director of TVC, occupies the office right at the top of his central London studio, surrounded by the paraphernalia of nearly 40 years in the business—awards and certificates, photographs of many friends and colleagues; proud, happy moments arranged carefully round the walls of the small, friendly space. John, approaching 70, joined TVC in 1957.

He's a quiet, round, bearded man with a faraway look in his eyes that in an instant turns into a twinkle. An old-fashioned English gentleman, semidisplaced in the closing years of the 20th century, who speaks nostalgically of the sixties when all the pretty TVC paint and trace girls wore miniskirts and shopped for trendy clothes on Carnaby Street during their lunch hour. A Kiplingesque character who peppers his talk with capital letters, referring to himself and his long time associates as The Old Gang or, more affectionately, as TOG. He lives in Kent with Christine, his "Lady Love," and rides whenever he can. I catch the excitement when he reminisces

about his first experience of riding to hounds.

## A Wet Tory

The English tradition, to which John certainly belongs, comes out of the 19th century through the mad Ruskin, the last great English critic, ardent supporter of Turner, passionate opponent of Modernism. It moves through the decorative idealism of William Morris, takes in the eccentricities of Lewis Carroll, permeates the compositions of Elgar and Delius, encompasses both the malice and the sublimity of Kipling's prose, reappears in the deeply romantic films of Powell and Pressburger, the common sense writings of Oxford philosopher John Austin and in the politics of pre-Thatcherite Toryism. The reader will be able to add other names to this list.

John Coates belongs here. He can't, for instance, locate himself within the radically-changed polit-

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A natural Tory whose idealism today seems quaint and ill-fitting within the Dorothy Parker range of British politics.

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ical environment of the last two decades. "I'm a very wet Tory. Well, I'm a socialist really." A natural Tory who now cannot identify with the new politics of conviction; whose idealism today seems quaint and



ill-fitting within the Dorothy Parker range of British politics.

Nevertheless, sidelined or not, John Coates has given TVC a new lease on life and a different personality since George Dunning died in 1979. As the psychedelia of the sixties ebbed away, exemplified in the unfinished fragment from *The Tempest* which George left behind, John's own interests asserted themselves. In the three years before the appearance of *The Snowman*, he turned around TVC from a commercials-led to an entertainment-led company which has subsequently produced a string of successful TV Specials including *Granpa* and *Father Christmas*; a feature film, *When the Wind Blows*, and a 6 x half hour series based on the Beatrix Potter books; he is currently working on an adaptation of the Posy Simmons book *Fred the Cat* with director Joanna Quinn and with director Jimmy Murukami on an adaptation of John Burningham's *Oi! Get Off My Train*. TVC's last production will be an adaptation of another Raymond Briggs book, *The Bear*, for which John has already written the end credits stating that this is TVC's last film.

The distinct, rounded, English animation style of TVC's recent productions, the emphasis on adaptation rather than original works—are both characteristic of the literary tradition. This narrative tradition is itself embedded in the romanticism of the landscape painters, novelists like Scott, poets like Wordsworth and unique English formations like Gothic literature and Victorian architecture. And this list clearly belongs with the other list above. The coming together of the elements of the tradition and the artists who work

Trapped in nostalgia and a mythical past where chums like Ratty and Mole and the childlike Toad could idle away innocent days together.

within it produces an instantly recognizable visual culture of which TVC's work is manifestly a part.

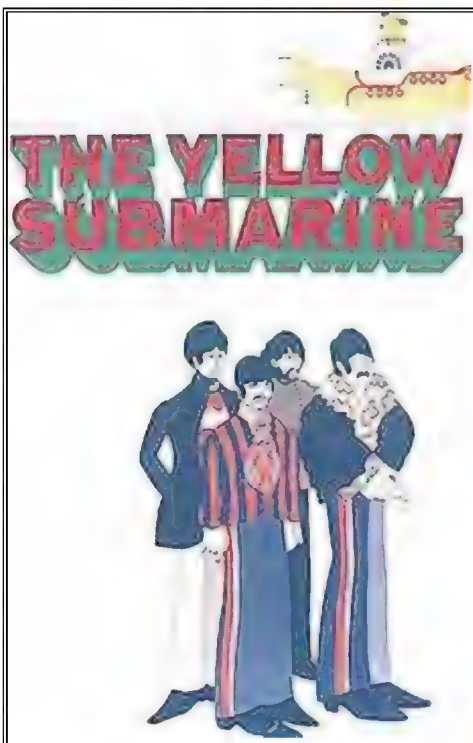
### End of an Era

Last year John Coates gathered his small, permanent, production staff together and gave them all two years notice. By June 5, 1997, TVC's 40th birthday, the production side of the company will cease to exist. By then, TVC will have made nearly 1,500 commercials, more than 70 documentaries and over 80 entertainment films—an enviable track record. It's the end of an era. It really is. Maybe the move into Europe,

with all its uncertainty, the globalization of communications through the Internet and the leap forward into post-modernism have left TVC (and John and The Old Gang) behind, trapped in nostalgia and a mythical past where chums like Ratty and Mole and the childlike Toad could idle away innocent days together.

John has had enough of the responsibility of keeping a boutique style production company going. There was a moment in the history of British production which favored the small independent producer. Inevitably this moment involved the setting up of Channel 4, the British broadcasting phenomenon which occurred in 1982. Until then there were two broadcasters and only three channels available in the UK: the BBC which was, and still is, responsible for two channels, BBC1, established 1936 and BBC2, established 1962 and ITV, the commercial channel established in 1956, which was, and still is, comprised of different regional ITV franchise holders who together transmit across one national network. All of these broadcasting organizations are produced in house, only rarely going out to independents to make their programmes for them. What makes Channel 4 distinct is that it has no in-house production—all its nonacquired programming is commissioned from independent producers.

This situation created a boom in the creative-led, independent production sector, which allowed companies like TVC to grow and which lasted until recession hit in 1990. By that time there were too many small companies chasing too few



The Yellow Submarine  
Courtesy of TVC London



commissions and staying in business became a struggle. During the recession, when John Coates was raising the finance for the Beatrix Potter series, TVC survived an entire year on *Snowman* revenue. In other words, to stay in business and maintain the confidence which is crucial at that delicate moment in financial negotiations, TVC had to consume its profits.

The post-recession economy has been characterized by consolidation. The individual talents that once thrived in the higgledy-piggledy creative soup of the eighties, when there was enough for everyone, have run for shelter into the emerging larger production companies, now that times are leaner. These companies are often locked into output deals with TV franchise holders, thus tying up a large part of the resources available for independents. In this situation, the small and genuinely independent producer has become increasingly squeezed.

Worse, as TVC fought its way out of recession with, first *The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends* and subsequently *The Wind in the Willows*, a new blow has struck—an acute international shortage of animators caused by the aggressive recruitment policies of American studios. The international success of animated films like *Beauty and the Beast* has led to a boom in the production of American feature production. Over a year ago, the American studios started competing for



**The Tailor of Gloucester**  
Courtesy of TVC London

*Damon the Mower* and *The Flying Man* opened up a new, nonstudio style in British animation.

animators, first in the States and then in Europe. Hire costs trebled everywhere and the British market has been decimated by the demands of a foreign feature industry which can afford to remove and retain all the indigenous talent from the marketplace. John Coates has lost 10 of his animators to Warner Bros. and for the first time he has been forced to put some of the animation for his new production, *The Willows in Winter*,



**Famous Fred**  
Courtesy of TVC London

into another studio. Meanwhile, it's especially galling for John to learn that *The Enemy*, nice Kate Mallory, Warner Bros.' Studio Manager, can't put her animators to work yet and they are all hanging around idle in Warner Bros.' posh Covent Garden premises. In a mood of defiance, John had some little badges made up which say "I haven't been asked to work at Warner Bros." The remaining TVC staff wear them proudly.

### Something of the History of TVC ...

By 1957, the Hollywood studio era was coming to an end. Canadian animator George Dunning was working for UPA's London studio when it was closed down. But George wanted to stay in London, so he decided to set up a new commercials studio, recruiting fellow countryman Richard Williams on a freelance basis as a studio animation director to help get TVC going. The time was propitious. Independent Television had been established in the UK for less than a year and the commercial break was something of an enigma for British directors and producers. As a result, companies like TVC, a dedicated commercial house headed up by an experienced team, were instantly successful.

John Coates was brought in to do the business side. Already established in a career at Associated Redifusion, one of the original ITV companies, as Assistant Controller of



Programmes, John was nevertheless restless and bored. In typically English fashion, a meeting between George and John was arranged through a mutual friend in a pub, as a result of which a partnership was formed which was to last 22 years until George's death in 1979.

Dunning, a talented animator, fitted in his own work around the production of commercials. *The Apple* (1959) was made during "down time," with several TVC staff working on individual segments, and was followed by the award-winning *Damon the Mower* and *The Flying Man*—all of which opened up a new, nonstudio style in British animation. Until then, only John Halas with his Eastern European sensibility and Bob Godfrey with his anarchic, goon-show surrealism, were working outside the mainstream.

Dunning's success brought a contract to TVC to make *The Beatles* series during the sixties which ran on ABC Television in the States from 1966-68. *Yellow Submarine* followed in 1968. John Coates describes the occasion when George Martin invited a small group comprising himself, George Dunning and Jack Stokes over to the Abbey Road Studios to hear the first pressing of the *Sergeant Pepper* album. Dunning, who had reservations about making a cinema feature based on a TV series, was suddenly won over. *Yellow Submarine* turned out to be a perfect match of music and image, a genuine celebration of the sixties youth rebellion, a high-point of hippie ideology and cul-



**The Snowman**  
Courtesy of TVC London

ture. During the press screening, which was overrun by young people dancing in the aisles, John Coates experienced a moment of excitement which became part of his vision for TVC's future—the power to entertain.

John read the government White Paper—"the only one I've ever read"—on the setting up of Channel 4, with its promise of support for the independent production community and its commitment to innovation and difference, with great interest. *The Snowman* had been lying on his

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**She's supported by John's calm professionalism and belief that her natural exuberance and talent will produce work of Oscar-winning quality.**

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desk for nearly a year and his £500 option was running out. He hastily assembled an 8 minute animatic set to a tune composed by Howard Blake and took it to Paul Madden at Channel 4. He raised £100,000 from Paul, £75,000 from the publishers and mortgaged his house. The rest, as they say, is history.

TVC's new Cardiff-based production, *Fred the Cat*, is being

directed by Joanna Quinn, whose short film credits have included *Girls Night Out*, *Body Beautiful* and *Britannia*. It's Joanna's first time in commercial production and she's finding the demands of a tight schedule hard. The lack of trained animators is an additional problem. But she's supported by John's calm professionalism and

his belief that her natural exuberance and tremendous talent will produce work of Oscar-winning quality. It would be a fitting exit for a fine company.

### **Retirement? Don't Even Think About It!**

**A**fter TVC closes down its production arm, which will be after the last production has been put to bed, John plans to slip into a new role as consultant to other people's projects, only coming in from the rural idyll of his home in Kent for a civilized schedule of lunchtime meetings. However he murmurs imperceptibly that there may still be one or two projects that he'd like to do. I glance at his desk. There's a battered, schoolboys' copy of *Henry V* half-hidden in a pile of papers ...

*Jill McGreal owns and runs her own London-based animation production company, CODE-NAME The Animation Agency. She produces television series for children and represents many well-known international directors for commercial work. She continues to write and teach about animation and film in general.*

# Quirino Cristiani

## The Untold Story of Argentina's Pioneer Animator

by Giannalberto Bendazzi

*The following article originally appeared in the June/July and September issues of the French magazine Banc-Titre/Animation Stand. The following English translation by Charles Solomon was done for the December 1984 issue of Graffiti, published by ASIFA-Hollywood. This publication, in honor of the centenary of Quirino Cristiani's birth, also includes a new introduction and an extra paragraph about Cristiani and Disney.—Editor*

It was 1980, and during a festival held in Turin, Italy, I happened to have breakfast with a man I had never met before, Simòn Feldman. He introduced himself as an Argentinean filmmaker (both animation and live action: a rarity); and hearing that I was an animation historian, he added, "I bet you ignore the [fact that the] first animated feature film was made in my country." I replied that I knew about it, but my only source was a vague mention in a clipping given to me by my excellent colleague Bruno Edera.

When back home, Feldman (who I still thank for his collaboration) sent me some photocopied press clippings he had collected about the film and the people who worked on it.

It was the beginning of research that would

lead me to track down the film's director, Quirino Cristiani, who was still alive and well in Bernal, Argentina; have him invited to his

home village of Santa Gioletta, Italy; and eventually publish in 1983 a book on him and his work (*Due volte l'oceano – Vita di*

*Quirino Cristiani, pioniere dell'animazione*) that reached him in time to reward him against the oblivion he had experienced during the last 40 years of his life.

Now, being the centennial of his birth, I'm happy to celebrate the anniversary by republishing this article, originally written in 1982.

Since then, very little new has been discovered about the subject (probably some of the discs that accompanied his third feature, *Peludópolis*, as an Argentinean animator told me at the last Annecy Festival). The text is then still correct—and a due homage to one of our least known pioneers.



Drawing by Diógenes Taborda for El Apóstol  
Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi



Our story begins on July 2, 1896, the day Quirino Cristiani was born in the little Italian village of Santa Guiletta, near Pavia; he was the son of Luigi Cristiani, a municipal secretary, and Adele Martinotti, a housewife. His father, unfortunately, lost his job and was unable to feed a family with five children. America, the Mecca of the poor, especially the Italian poor, beckoned; so Luigi Cristiani went off to Argentina, where he found work. The rest of the family followed. That was in 1900.

In Argentina, Quirino Cristiani did not find the Indians with feathers in their hair that he expected. Instead he found Buenos Aires, a large city that was expanding at a feverish pace. He also found friends and happiness. In his teens, the immigrant peasant discovered his love for drawing. He drew on the walls of houses; he sketched animals in the zoo; and very briefly, he attended the Academy of Fine Arts. At that time, newspapers were full of political cartoons and comic strips. Quirino began to hang around newspaper

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He shot the film on the terrace, using the sun as his light source, with wind ready to ruin a shot at any moment.

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offices, where he found editors willing to publish his caricatures. So, without becoming famous, he became known.

Meanwhile, another Italian, Federico Valle (born in Asti in



Drawing by Diógenes Taborda for *El Apóstol*  
Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi

1880) had come to Buenos Aires. Valle had worked for the Lumière Brothers and the Urban Trading Co. as a cameraman and documentary filmmaker. He was probably the first man to employ aerial cinematography (with Wilbur Wright, at Centocelle, near Rome, in 1909). In Argentina, he became a producer, but his first love was the newsreel. And given the Argentine love—and especially of the citizens of Buenos Aires—for political discussion and satire, what could be better than newsreels with political cartoons in them? And who better to draw them than this young man, already destined for a bright future, and ready and eager to sell his stuff at a reasonable price?

In 1916, in Buenos Aires, the newsreel "Actualidades Valle" had two-and-a-half minutes of animation entitled *La intervención en la provincia de Buenos Aires*. Its subject: the intervention by President Irigoyen against the governor of Buenos Aires, Marcelino Ugarte. Irigoyen charged him with dishonesty, and replaced him. Quirino Cristiani had

drawn and animated the sequence using techniques he had learned from studying films by Émile Cohl that Valle had kept in his exchange. His studio could hardly be described as state-of-the-art, even then: he shot the film frame-by-frame on the terrace of a house in Buenos Aires, using the sun as his light source, with wind ready to ruin a shot at any moment. Starting with this first film, Cristiani used cardboard cutouts, a technique he later perfected and patented.

Cristiani was happy with the results, as was the audience. Valle was enthusiastic. He wasn't interested in politics, but he knew the Argentines were. So was the

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Now there were no longer a president, and the sharks of the Radical Party were hidden in their dens.

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young animator. Valle then reached an agreement with a Mr. Franchini, who among other activities, owned several movie theaters. Together, they raised the money for the most ambitious project in the history of Latin America Cinema: a feature-length political satire on Hipólito Irigoyen, the country's new President. This was to be the first feature-length animated film ever made.

### **El Apóstol**

**H**ipólito Irigoyen, the charismatic leader of the Radical Party, won the 1916 presidential elections by a large majority, thus ending the

long rule of the conservatives. The Radical Party was the party of the lower middle class and the "populist," activist segments of society. Irigoyen was an honest man, but somewhat absent-

*El Apóstol* had its premiere on November 9, 1917 at the Select Theater (which co-producer Franchini owned). "The film is magnificent," said the review in the newspaper *Crítica*, "and demon-

conceived the film, made the drawings, and animated the characters. In those days, no one thought of filmmakers—films were spoken of something "produced" by someone.

Cristiani's life was complicated by the fact that Valle had hired Diógenes Taborda, known as "El Mono" ("The Monkey," as he was apparently very ugly), to design characters for the film. El Mono was the most famous humorous cartoonist of the time; a veritable star, his vaguely art nouveau cartoons would sell any journal in which they appeared. But Taborda had no desire to devote his life to something he knew nothing about, and cared to know nothing about. He would make two or three drawings and then turn the rest over to Cristiani, who could do whatever he wanted ... as long as Taborda's name got the largest billing in the credits. Everyone was happy with this arrangement (especially Valle, who was only interested in buying El Mono's popularity), and so the deal had



Frame enlargement from *Peludópolis* showing Juan Pueblo confronting members of the junta.

Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi

minded; the victim, some said, of unscrupulous associates. Moreover, he and his fellow Radicals lacked the polished style of the conservatives: they tended to be long-winded, with a certain tendency toward demagoguery. All these factors made Irigoyen an ideal target for the young cartoonist, who was eager to make fun of everyone and everything.

The film, *El Apóstol* (*The Apostle*), showed Irigoyen wanting to bring morality to public life and eliminate corruption in Buenos Aires. To accomplish his lofty aims, he ascends to heaven where Jupiter lends the new president his thunderbolts. Irigoyen then hurled the redemptive fire at the city, which made for a most impressive blaze. The audience particularly enjoyed the final sequence, which combined models built by the French architect Andrés Ducaud and special effects.

strates the wonderful progress our national cinema has made." *La Razon* agreed, saying it was, "A graphic work that reveals enormous labor, patience and even genius." A good many other papers praised Valle, the film, and



Frame enlargement from *Peludópolis* showing Juan Pueblo, the Argentine everyman.

Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi

the country. But hardly anyone noticed that Cristiani had the one true claim to authorship: He had

been struck. The friendship between the two artists was sealed when Taborda served as best man



at Cristiani's wedding. (The press, who had not heard otherwise, printed the name of Taborda as the artist who made *El Apóstol*, forgetting the film's humble "animator.")

*El Apóstol* was an hour and ten minutes long and was said to be composed of 58,000 drawings, which means 58,000 frames, as the film was made utilizing cutouts. All known copies of the film were lost in a fire in Federico Valle's vaults in 1926.

### Without a Trace

While *El Apóstol* was being made and shown, Europe, of course, was still in the midst of the Great War. The countries of South America decided to remain neutral, though some sparks managed to reach the Río de la Plata. Germany wanted Argentina to come into the war on their side at any price. The Argentine military loved German discipline, the German art of war, and the German army: they wanted to fight on the same side as these masters. But Irigoyen, like his party and the majority of the population, was both anti-military and anti-war. As he seemed immune to all diplomatic and public pressure, the Germans decided to try duplicity. Baron von Luxburg, the Second Reich's gray eminence in Argentina, ordered a German U-boat to torpedo an Argentine ship, making sure "to leave no trace" ("sin dejar rastros," in Spanish), so the deed could be blamed on the Anglo-French alliance, hoping popular indignation would then force Irigoyen to declare war. The plan failed: a boat was torpedoed and sunk, but the survivors testified that there was no signs of either British



Quirino Cristiani in Santa Giuletta, on November 29, 1981, when he was being honored by the local government.

Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi

or French ships in Argentine waters at the time. Irigoyen was furious at Luxburg, but did not publicize the episode, although it became the subject of some of the best porteños jokes of the time--porteños ("people of the port") was the common name natives of Buenos Aires called themselves.

Cristiani couldn't wait to do a cartoon on the subject. He found new producers and in 1918 was

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He ascends to heaven  
where Jupiter lends  
the new president  
his thunderbolts.

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able to offer the public the second animated feature ever made, *Sin dejar rastros*. This time around, however, there was no enthusiastic public reception, nor did the press print a single word about it. For "diplomatic reasons" (as the war was still going on), the film was seized by the police and disappeared into the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs.

Here begins the most confused part of Cristiani's career. He could not earn a living as a filmmaker: the Argentine market was just too limited, and the public showed little interest in full-length animated films. He continued to submit cartoons and political caricatures to the papers. Irigoyen, the first president elected in a manner faithful to the rules and spirit of the constitution and popular democracy, manifested none of the intolerance so characteristic of Latin America leaders, and took no action to stop Cristiani, leaving the president's old satirist free to work for the mass media.

Cristiani now had two children, and the income from the sale of his cartoons was apparently not enough to support a family of four. He then started a sort of "gypsy" business whereby he rented a wagon and traveled to the poorer areas, where there were no movie theaters, and set up a folding screen and projector and showed films, especially Chaplin shorts mixed in with commercials that he made himself; the advertising side of the business was called Publi-Cinema. It was an enormous success: crowds would even gather in the middle of the streets. And because of that, the municipal authorities stopped it, charging him with "disturbing the peace and interrupting traffic."

Cristiani never gave up on animation; on the contrary, he made a number of shorts as the chance arose. There were two surgical films: *Rhinoplastia* and *Gastrotomia* (both 1925), made in collaboration with professors José Arce and Ocsar Ivanisevitch. He made films about current events, including sports, notably the fights



of boxer Luis Angel Firpo--Firpo-Brennan and Firpo-Dempsey (both 1923)--and *Uruguayos forever* (1924) on the victory of the Uruguay soccer team. *Humberto de garufa* (Little Umberto's Frolic) (1924), was inspired by the visit of Umberto of Savoy, the young and carefree crown prince of Italy. In 1927, he became head of publicity for MGM locally, although this did not prevent him from making animated commercials on the side. And he began to set up the Cristiani Studios at 2121 Calle Sarmiento.

### Peludópolis

It was in this studio, in 1929, that another act in the Italo-Argentine filmmaker's career began. Working from a script by Eduardo Gonzalez Lanuza, he began making *Peludópolis*, his third animated feature. Once again Hipólito Irigoyen and Irigoyenism was his target. (Irigoyen had been elected president a second time in 1928 by a two-to-one margin). Cristiani brought all his imagination and technical discoveries into play. As usual, he used articulated characters cut out from cardboard. He finished the film in 1931 and it had its premiere on September 16. Meanwhile, something had happened.

On September 6, 1930, a year before the film's premiere, Irigoyen had been overthrown by military coup d'état. The increasingly senile president had made one error after another, and his fellow party members had lost most of their prestige and credibility through their dishonesty and corruption. The coup pleased no one, but everyone agreed that, after all, it was a solution.

For Cristiani, it was a tragedy.

His film satirized the corruption of the old president's associates, showing the difficulties of keeping the "Argentine ship of state" afloat in an ocean filled with voracious

But hardly anyone noticed that Cristiani had the one true claim to authorship.



*Peludópolis*

Courtesy of Giannalberto Bendazzi

sharks. Now there were no longer a president, and the sharks of the Radical Party were hidden in their dens. What to do?

Cristiani chose to take a middle-of-the-road position. He showed the corruption of Irigoyen and his followers (these scenes had already been shot anyway ...), he showed the generals who had taken power, and, above all, he showed an average man of people (a

For "diplomatic reasons," the film was seized by the police and disappeared into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

character called Juan Pueblo) who asked for good government and respect for all rights. Further, he offered a little preamble in verse

asserting that the film came of no sectarian spirit. Then on the fateful evening of September 16, 1931, he shook hands with the provisional president, José Felix Uriburu, who honored him with his presence, sat in his chair and crossed his fingers.

The film wasn't a hit. The audiences laughed at times, but generally thought the situation too serious to be laughed at. Also, a year-and-a-half after the film's premiere, Irigoyen died in his bed. The Argentine people, who had done nothing when he had been chased out of Casa Rosada, rushed into the street and squares, falling prey to an irresistible flood of emotion. On the one hand, Cristiani felt the same emotions, on the other, he understood that a film "against" the ghost of a friend of the people no longer had the slightest chance of success. He therefore withdrew it from circulation.

*Peludópolis* (i.e., "the city of the Peludo, or "Peludo City," also refers to Irigoyen's nickname, Peludo) was Cristiani's last major animated film. It was 80 minutes long with sound (on disc)--making it the first animated feature with sound. The newspaper critics received it rather favorably: "this work is undoubtedly one of the most important of our national cinema ... a tuneful, amusing and charming film." (*La Razon*) "There are many reasons to be amused--the caricatures themselves, the songs, the comic ideas, the details." (*El Diario*) "The images are too rigid, not smooth enough, but cartoonist Cristiani shows a singular talent for the difficult art of animation." (*La Nacion*)

*Peludópolis'* economic fiasco came as a severe blow to the 35-



year-old filmmaker, who already had a long career behind him. Cristiani realized that he could never make it as a producer and creator of animated films in Argentina. Walt Disney had become a success: his films reached Argentina with the charm of their richness, their technical perfection, their economic power. The little artisan from Santa Giuletta simply could not challenge so powerful a studio. Moreover, he was never an "artist" or an inspired poet like Alexandre Alexeieff or Norman McLaren. He never had an artistic vision of the world to communicate, or the need to create a body of work. He was only a cartoonist with a taste for satire, an artisan with a flair for tinkering and little inventions.

So, during the '30s, he stopped making films and cut back on his creative activities in favor of technical ones: he formed a company and the Studios Cristiani (which had moved to 460 Calle Jose Evaristo Uriburu) became one of the best movie labs in Argentina, specializing in the translation and subtitling of foreign films.

### Fables

Animation, for him, was now a hobby. And towards the end of the 1930s, his animation career had a brief revival when Constancio Vigil contracted with Cristiani to produce a series of shorts based on fables he had written and published.

The first of these fables was *El Mono relojero* (The Monkey Watchmaker). It premiered in February 1938 and had a good run. The City of Buenos Aires even honored it with a special prize. But Constancio Vigil did not want to put up any more money and the

series ended with its first installment. *El Mono relojero* is a film of middling quality—a good, professional production for the time. For the first time Cristiani abandoned cardboard cutouts in

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He was only a cartoonist  
with a taste for satire, an  
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tinkering and little  
inventions.

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favor of "classic" North American cel animation. Many people wrote at the time that this black and white short was the first Argentine sound cartoon!

Cristiani became increasingly absorbed with his subtitling work, but still found time to make *Enter pitos y flautas* (Between Whistles and Flutes) in 1941. It was about soccer, is very short, and probably unsatisfying: Cristiani will not willingly talk about it. His last film was *Carbonada* (the name of an Argentine salad). It was made in 1943 and received the City Council Award.

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The little artisan from Santa  
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Incidentally, Cristiani met Walt Disney, during Disney's trip to South America in 1941, and screened some of his films for him. He was a Disney fan, and, for a time, the two thought about collaborating on the Latin American project Disney was planning. No deal was made, but Cristiani suggested that Disney contact Molina Campos, who was

not an animator, but a cartoonist who specialized in gaucho caricatures. Disney followed his advice.

Quirino's artistic career is virtually over. Two fires, one in 1957, the other in 1961, destroyed his entire oeuvre: negatives, prints, original drawings, and papers.

The aging pioneer still keeps documents from his career—photos inscribed by presidents, ministers, mayors; testimonials; honorary diplomas in English; etc.—but he no longer works. He lives quietly with his family near Buenos Aires, having sold his laboratory. A vegetarian and a nudist, this frugal man had never taken an airplane before his visit to Italy in November 1981, when he received an invitation from the provincial government of Pavia. He visited the little country village of his birth and was widely feted, especially by the humble film critic who signs this article and who traced him to the far side of the planet after a four year search ....

*Giannalberto Bendazzi is a Milan-based film historian and critic whose book on Quirino Cristiani, Due volte l'oceano, was published in 1983. His history of animation, Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation, is published in the US by Indiana University Press and in the UK by John Libbey.*



# Sue Loughlin

## An Animator's Profile

by Rita Street

**B**ritish animator Sue Loughlin always knew she would have a career in the world of art. Even as a child she believed she was destined to bring the beautiful images in her mind to life. However, the piece in the puzzle she didn't see as a child and even as a young woman, was that she would make a living by making those images move. "Art was my favorite subject in school and I knew I would end up doing something art based. But when I went to the Liverpool Art School I initially wanted to do illustration. I only discovered animation by attending a lecture on animation history. For me, it was like a revelation."

Loughlin had always thought of animation as "comic" or for children, but after that lecture, after she saw that animation could also be theatrical and mov-

The quicker you worked, the quicker you could see your character move.



Sue Loughlin

ing, she was hooked. "I left it thinking, 'God, that's so brilliant. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to animate.'"

### To Give Something Life

**A**nd animate she did. After completing her Bachelor's of Fine Art at Liverpool, she went for her postgraduate degree at the United Kingdom's National Film and Television School. There she learned the traditional skills of an animator, working as she says, mainly with pencil and paper because the

price of cels was simply not within the limitations of her small student budget. She remembers those first years at the school, learning and experimenting with the medium, as a mixture of ecstasy and tedium. "I couldn't believe I was allowed to spend the whole day drawing. It was heaven. No one was going to say I had to do other things. On the other hand, it seemed weird that it took so much time to create animation. It's so labor intensive. But the quicker

you worked, the quicker you could see your character move on the pencil test machine. And once you've seen something move, even though it flashes by quickly, you want to rush back and do all that work again, simply because it is so amazing to give something life."

While in school, Loughlin kept exploring the medium of art. She studied artists from different ages, how they approached their work, the progression of their personal style and the materials and tools they worked with. She was





The Grand National by Sue Loughlin

attracted early on to the leader of the Fauvists, Henri Matisse and his experiments into the very essence of images, or Expressionism.

### Grand National

Her first short film, *Grand National* is almost an homage to Matisse's strong lines, but it is also a send-up to Picasso, which is seen especially in the strength of her horses. Yet, *Grand National* is much more than the influences of great artists on Loughlin's style. The piece has a strong personality all its own, reflective of Loughlin's own wit and passion.

Growing up in Liverpool, the home of the Grand National, Loughlin remembers going each year as a young girl, looking through the great gates, watching the attendees file in and wishing she could afford to go. "It was such a personal event for me," Loughlin said, "It was the only major event in our small town each year and it lasted for three days. The rest of the year it [the stadium] was closed. One year, my Dad bought me some tickets for my birthday and I got to see

the horses. When I went to art school I thought I definitely had to make a film about the race."

*Grand National* is a moving portrayal of the very "real," even though it is painted with only black ink and dashes of color. The film opens on the empty streets surrounding the stadium—the quiet before the storm—then shows the arrival of hundreds upon hundreds of automobiles. As the crowds unfold onto the stadium like an irrepressible tide, the eye of the camera moves through the crowds, stopping to examine small huddles of race goers—blue collar workers comparing bets, rich women talking

I couldn't believe I was allowed to spend the whole day drawing. It was heaven.

about the horses but actually evaluating each other's attire, young couples out for the day and impressed by all who are there to see and be seen.

The horses are led out, looking—with Loughlin's bold painted lines—like great beasts from legendary Troy. The jockeys arrive and Loughlin brings their racing colors to life with single strokes of purple, red, and blue. The race begins, and the sound of the crowd is at once deafening and utterly silent against the pounding of the horses' hooves. At each jump, riders and horses fall and brush, stripped away from the obstacle, flies toward the camera. The horses come around the corner on the last 400 yards and two horses are neck and neck. The remaining riders' colors blur together in a rainbow of power and speed. Rhyme & Reason crosses the finish line first and the jockey heads to the Winner's Circle. A typical day at the races.



The Grand National by Sue Loughlin

But as the crowd moves out of the stands into their taxis and cars, the audience is left with unanswered questions. Why do

apart, while painting another cel on top. "I had a carpenter make it for me. It was trial and error though because I had to have



Amnesty International PSA

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people go to the races? What does racing and betting mean? And, if racing means so much, especially to people in a small town, what is left to look forward to during those interminable days between one Grand National and the next?

She could cross a road without looking and nothing would happen.

To complete *Grand National* Loughlin invented a new light-box so that she could paint directly onto a cel without using a pencil first. "I wanted that spontaneity," she says, "which gets lost drawing first and then rendering later." So she created a design that would allow her to put a piece of glass over a wet cel, keeping each cel about an inch

two peg bars, one on top of the other. Still, to keep the cels registered, I have to keep my head in the same position each time. If I move it goes out of registration." Although the system may sound awkward, Loughlin says it is actually comfortable, works fine and served her purpose even as she made the transition to professional work while still in school.

I wanted that spontaneity, which gets lost drawing first and then rendering later.

### Social Reform and Women's Rights

One of the most impressive projects completed early on with her new fangled lightbox, was for the Genesis World Tour of 1992. For *Dreaming While You Sleep*, a song about a reckless driver, Loughlin created images of cars driving through hill country. Her animation, which was projected during the tour, had atmospheric blue backgrounds and for the night scenes, bright yellow headlights that whirled and sped around dizzying curves. *Dreaming While You Sleep* led to other professional jobs about social reform and women's rights.

For an Amnesty International public service announcement, she created a world where an ordinary woman, a free sort of spirit, is torn apart from everything she has known. "It's like a



Woman With A Purpose Art created for the 1993 Levis Jeans for Women Advertising Campaign— Foote, Cone & Belding/S.F.



black cloud comes over and rips her apart from her family," says Loughlin, who explains that the

was like an organic thing that came alive," says Loughlin, who remembers that the only guide-

would happen."

The spot ends with the tiny woman approaching an enormous door. She pauses for a brief moment, then decides without a doubt there is no reason to be stopped by a mere door—no matter how big and ominous it happens to be—and easily pushes through. The woman in this spot is a lot like the persona of Loughlin herself, a person who is unafraid to make her own way.

When Loughlin discovered animation, she decided to make it her own. When she thought of a new way to create her art, she built herself a tool and launched her career—a career based on taking the seemingly everyday and making it controversial and turning the already controversial into art.

A woman who has certainly fulfilled her childhood dream, Loughlin is not only an animator, she is definitely an artist in the grandest sense of the word.



**Amnesty International PSA**

© Amnesty Intl

piece is full of symbolism, a tool she finds essential in much of her storytelling.

For Levi's "Jeans For Women" campaign, Loughlin created *Woman With a Purpose*, a 30 second spot about a woman who walks through all the many obstacles a city can conjure up, unafraid. "The city in that spot

lines she received from the ad agency were to give the woman an attitude and to make her small. "Well, I didn't want to make her entirely small, only in comparison to how big the city was. I wanted her to walk through everything as if no dangers could touch her. She could cross a road without looking and nothing



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*Rita Street, a freelance writer based in Los Angeles, is the founder of Women in Animation and former editor and publisher of Animation Magazine.*

# Robert Breer

## Animator

by Jackie Leger

**R**obert Breer's career as artist and animator spans 50 years and his creative explorations have made him an international figure. He began his artistic pursuits as a painter while living in Paris from 1949-59. Using an old Bolex 16mm camera, his first films, such as *Form Phases*, were simple stop motion studies based on his abstract paintings.

Breer has always been fascinated by the mechanics of film. Perhaps his father's fascination with 3-D inspired Breer to tinker with early mechanical cinematic de-

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The compositions are enhanced by kitchen clatter in a free stream of consciousness approach.

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VICES. His father was an engineer and designer of the legendary Chrysler Airflow automobile in 1934 and built a 3-D camera to film all the family vacations. After studying engineering at Stanford, Breer changed his focus toward hand crafted arts and began experimenting with flip books. These animations, done on ordinary 4" x 6" file cards have become the standard for all of Breer's work, even to this day.

### Influences

**L**ike many of his generation, Breer's early work was influenced by the various European modern art movements

of the early 20th century, ranging from the abstract forms of the Russian Constructivists and the structuralist formulas of the Bauhaus, to the nonsensical universe of the Dadaists. Through his association with the Denise René Gallery, which specialized in geometric art, he saw the abstract films of such pioneers as Hans Richter, Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann and Fernand Léger. Breer acknowledges his respect for this purist, "cubist" cinema, which uses geometric shapes moving in time and space. In 1955, he helped organize and exhibited in a show in Paris entitled "Le Mouvement" (The Movement), which paved the way for new cinema aesthetics. During this period, Breer also met the poet Alan Ginsberg and introduced him

to his film *Recreation* (1956), which made use of frame-by-frame experiments in a non-narrative structure. Although Breer disdains being labeled a beatnik, the film does capture some aspects of beat

poetry and music.

When Breer returned to the United States in the late 1950s, the American avant-garde was thriving and films by Kenneth Anger,



**Robert Breer**

Courtesy of Anthology Film Archives

Stan Brakhage, Peter Kubelka and Maria Menken were creating a new visionary movement. Breer found kindred spirits within the New York experimental scene. As Pop Art emerged as a phenome-

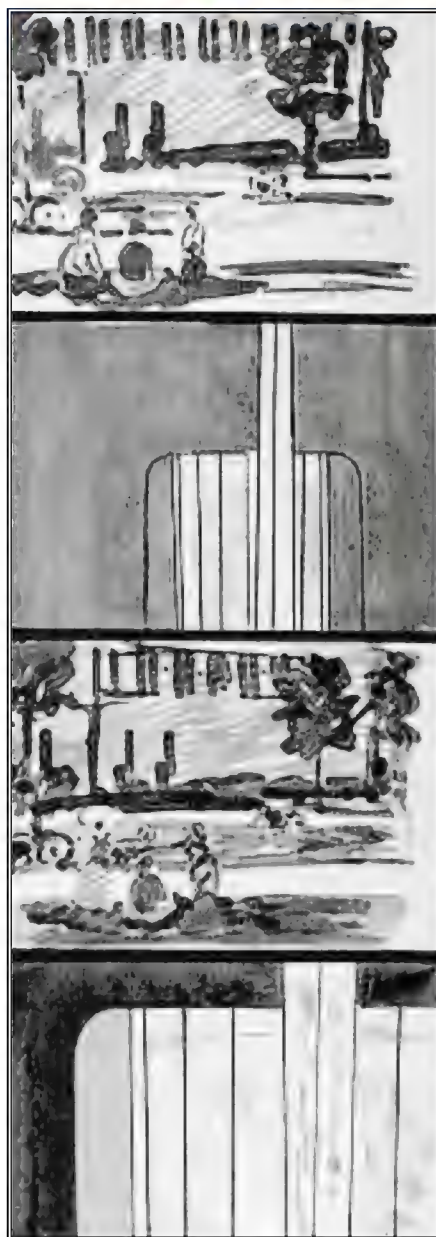


non in the 1960s, Breer befriended Claes Oldenburg and others. He worked on the TV show, *David Brinkley's Journal*, filming pieces on art shows in Europe; at the same time, he made his debut documentary on the sculptor Jean Tinguely in 1961, *Homage to Tinguely*. Screened at the Museum of Modern Art, it reflects Breer's interest in mechanical forms and the fine art of moving sculpture; techniques he used in his work, as his own kinetic sculpture was sparked by Tinguely's keen interest in mechanical gadgets, kinetic movement and abstract forms.

Breer was influenced by the new performance art and "happenings" making waves in the avant-garde of Europe and New York. He worked briefly with Claes Oldenburg and his performance pieces resulting in a 13 minute film, *Pat's Birthday* (1962). Breer also befriended artists like Nam June Paik, Charlotte Mormon and others exposed to the new trends in multimedia events.

While he was working on the film *Fist Fight*, he met Stockhausen, then working in Cologne on *Originale*, a performance piece. The composer's work soon came into vogue in American circles and he was asked to perform his piece in New York's Judson Hall in 1964. Breer presented *Fist Fight* as part of this performance, making the film a visual event in its own right.

Always whimsical, Breer soon developed a line technique related to the free form work of Swiss painter Paul Klee. Such short narrative pieces as *A Man with his Dog Out for Air* (1958) and *Inner and Outer Space* (1960) use the dynamics of drawing and line to capture the essence of humor and motion. Time and time again, he



Swiss Army Knife with Rats and Pigeons,  
Robert Breer, 1981

Courtesy of Robert Breer

relies on the roots of simple techniques of pencils or 4 x 6 cards for inspiration. While Breer rarely uses conventional storytelling techniques, these films have a sense of

The films have a sense of the quick movements of a Tex Avery cartoon and the wit of an electric comic strip.

the quick movements of a Tex Avery cartoon and the wit of an electric comic strip.

### Historical Perspectives

Breer continued to search for historical perspectives in his work and discovered the color theories of Chevreul and Rood. He also began a series of minimalist pieces based on number series, which were nonfigurative and based on geometry and formal issues. 66, 69 and 70 rely on formalist images from his early research into color paintings.

The 1970s brought Breer into a more commercial world of animation and he worked for the Children's Television Workshop in 1971 doing animation for *The Electric Company*. His popular *Gulls and Buoys* relates back both to the poetry of William Carlos Williams and the early rotoscoping techniques devised by Max Fleischer back in 1916. Breer explored the latter method in order to give a live-action sense to the animated form. Disney and other commercial studios still use this method to animate reality-based scenes. With his new interest in technology, Breer was invited to Japan with other artists to work on the Pepsi Pavilion, making a set of mobile sculptures. While in Japan, he made *Fuji*, again using rotoscoping combined with Japanese textural imagery.

Returning to the United States, for his next work, *LMNO* (1978), he once again sought out historical references. A homage to one of the fathers of animation, Émile Cohl, it uses a simple French policeman as a main character. Cohl became famous for his Fantoché stick figure, which predated Mickey by 20 years. Using

the simple technique of 4 x 6 index cards, this film used every imaginable technique from spray paint to pencils. His next film, *TZ*, continues this line of energetic experiments and is a portrait of his new living space then near the Tappan Zee bridge, in New York's Hudson River Valley. Breer often uses domestic imagery in his work, incorporating objects surrounding the artist to fantasy sequences using Polaroid photographs reworked with erasable marker pens. The compositions, as always on 4 x 6 index cards, are enhanced by kitchen clatter in a free stream of consciousness approach.

Breer's work continued his experiments with various techniques and materials with *Swiss Army Knife with Rats and Pigeons* (1980), which again includes live-action and line techniques.

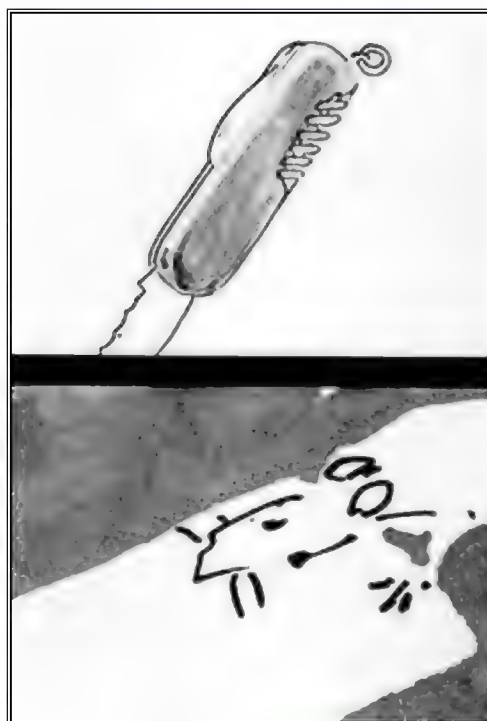
Raising a family throughout the 1980s, Breer began to work with what he considers "children's animation," resulting in *A Frog on a Swing* (1988), which is dedicated to his daughter. He also experimented with associative spontaneity in *Trial Balloons*, a metaphor for anything experimental.

In recent years, Breer continued to make one film per year. His *Sparkill Ave!* (1993) is a homey study on his new neighborhood using hundreds of still photographs, combined with index card drawings. As always,



**A Frog on the Swing, Robert Breer, 1988**  
Courtesy of Robert Breer

A continuous animation based on his explorations into the devices of cinema's early history (and prehistory), which dazzled audiences by creating visual kinesis.



**A Frog on the Swing, Robert Breer, 1988**  
Courtesy of Robert Breer

he prefers animation "close to home."

Today, Breer continues exploring animated forms while teaching animation at Cooper Union in New York City. When asked about his current work, he says that he still relies on the history of cinema and early "gadgets" as the source of his inspiration. His most recent work *Now You See It* (1996), now on exhibit at the

American Museum of the Moving Image, in New York, uses a two sided panel which spins into an animated film much like a Thaumatrope, the first cinematic device that used persistence of vision back in 1826. Like two slides flipping back and forth, it is a continuous animation based on his explorations into the devices of cinema's early history (and prehistory), which dazzled audiences by creating visual kinesis.

At the heart of his work is the imagination of the artist mixed with the inquisitive mind of the mad scientist, delving into lost archives of cinema to revive forgotten art forms and giving them new life for generations to come. This is the secret to Breer's unique world.

*Jackie Leger is a Santa Monica-based documentary filmmaker interested in the roots of American experimental film.*



# *The Olympiad of Animation*

## *An Interview With*

### *Fini Littlejohn*

by Harvey Deneroff

I first came to know Fini Littlejohn in 1982, when I took over as editor of *Graffiti*, the ASIFA-Hollywood newsletter. While not the celebrity her husband Bill was and is, I soon came to see that she was an important presence in the local and international animation scene. It was also around that time, that Fini started her campaign for what would become the Olympiad of Animation, which was held in conjunction with the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. A sort of pocket film festival, with many of the trappings of more established events like the Annecy, it briefly brought animation and the Olympics together in a unique gathering which, unfortunately, has for many faded into memory.

In a professional sense, Fini's involvement with animation has always been peripheral at best, but remains no less passionate about

She was inspired by producer Les Goldman, who always "had great visions for animation."

the medium. Born in Vienna, Josephine (Fini) Rudiger attended the Institute of Arts & Crafts there, initially studying fashion design,



**Bill and Fini Littlejohn (in center), at their home earlier this year, flanked by documentary filmmakers Freida Moch and Terry Sanders.**

Courtesy of Fini Littlejohn

then illustration, publicity and stage design. However, it was as an actress that her talents first came into demand. She appeared in a number of stage productions, participated in the city's "literary cabaret" and had a part in Wily Forst's classic film, *Maskerade*, starring Anton Walbrook.

In 1937, at age 22, she realized that, as a Jew, her career options in Austria were limited and managed to get to the United States, where she had a uncle. She left rather suddenly and afterwards always felt awkward about leaving in the midst of a stage production. She recalls that, "It took me a long time to get over that,

because in the theater [everyone was] very friendly and warm." It wasn't until she was invited back with other emigre artists to participate in the 1993 Viennale that she learned that, "They fired everybody two months [after I left], including the director. So, I wouldn't have had much hope for a future there. I didn't know that. If I did, I would have been less homesick for Vienna."

Handicapped by language in New York, she fell back on her art training, got an assignment as a book illustrator, but mostly painted window backgrounds for major New York department stores. She moved to Los Angeles in 1938,

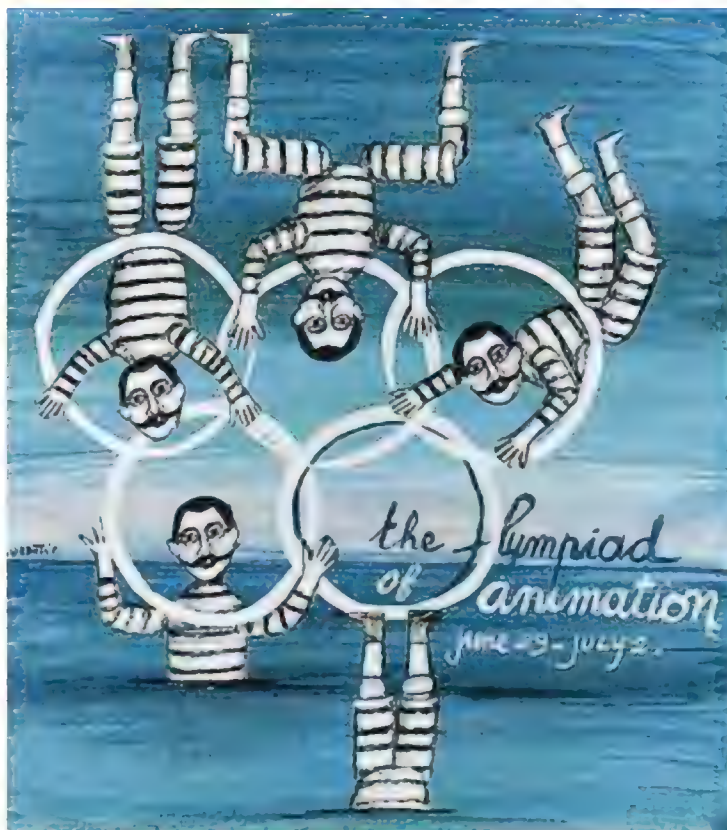
where she briefly wound up working at Disney's, doing incidental character design for *Pinocchio*, as well as "design, research and story for *Cinderella*, *Dumbo* and other future projects." (In this, she was probably one of the first women the studio used in any sort of official creative capacity.) However, she again mostly earned her living as a commercial artist for department stores, as well as doing two other children's books.

### An Interest in Animation

She married Bill in 1943 and it was through him that she continued to develop her interest in animation. When he became active in ASIFA-International and attending various international festivals, Fini tagged along. Soon, their Malibu home became a favorite stopover for animation artists from around the world.

Her idea for the Olympiad of Animation, she says, was inspired by producer Les Goldman (*How the Grinch Stole Christmas*) who always "had great visions for animation." And it was his ideas that came to mind "when there was so much talk about the Olympic Arts Festival" in anticipation of the 1984 Los Angeles games.

Around this time, Fini broke her arm and was forced to largely get around by bus, something which is not easy in an autocentric town like Los Angeles. This did not stop her, and only "a day or two after my accident," she recalls that "I



Bill Hurtz' Logo Film for Olympiad of Animation based on Luzzati's poster.

bumped into Paul Ziffern's wife, who said, 'Oh, I'm sorry for you.' (He was a big animal in the Olympics.) I said, 'You could really help me. I would like to have an animation festival,' " and asked if Paul could help. Initially he couldn't, but did eventually point her in the right direction.

Fini's initial idea was to have a program of "all these wonderful

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You have to go to the studio and ask them for permission to approach the artists. I had not known that.

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films we had seen for the past 30 some years we've been going to festivals and that you never see here." ASIFA-Hollywood, headed by animation writer-voice artist Bill

Scott, took the event under its wing; subsequently, through voice actor June Foray, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science agreed to play host at its Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills. (It helped that Foray was on the Academy's Board of Governors.)

The project now fell under the aegis of the Academy's Douglas Edwards. Eventually, Prescott Wright, a distributor and experienced film festival hand, was brought in to manage the actual event.

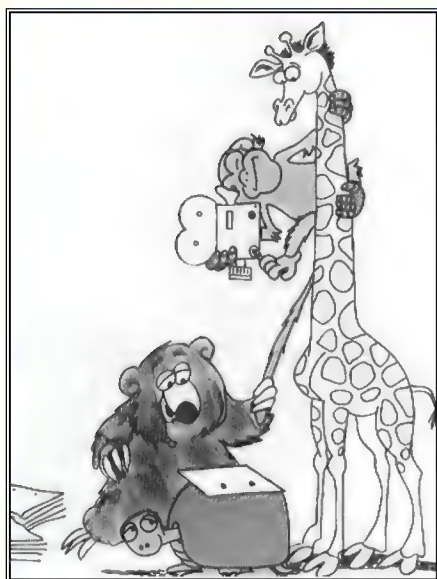
(Critic and historian Charles Solomon came in to help with the final programming.) In addition to Fini's idea for a retrospective, there came the idea to have "new films made especially for the Olympics." She felt that "was a problem," but it really did not seem to phase her.

### I Will Make a Film For You

Fini then set out to personally go out and recruit people to make films especially for the event dealing with the Olympics. Thus, she took the occasion of her and Bill's travels to festivals like Lucca and Annecy to recruit filmmakers to the cause. "The first one that said I will make a film for you," she recalls, "was Bruno Bozzetto. The second was [Osvaldo] Cavandoli. Those were the two biggies."

In the process of soliciting films, she learned first hand some of the political realities of the day. Thus,





Opening logo film for Olympiad of Animation, supervised by Bill Littlejohn

she was initially taken aback by "the cool reception" she got from people in places like the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. "Even Feodor Khitruk," she notes, "who was really a good friend, said 'I cannot make a film.' Finally one of the East Germans said to me, 'You cannot approach the artists, you have to go to the studio and ask them for permission to approach the artists.' I had not known that."

She also did not realize the fallout from the 1980 Moscow Olympics, which the US boycotted, which eventually led to a reciprocal boycott of the L.A. games by the USSR, which certainly did not help Fini in her mission.

Nevertheless, some 140 new short films on "The Spirit of the Olympics" from 18 countries were submitted, of which 32 were selected. In addition to Italy's Bozzetto and Cavandoli, there were films by such world-class animators as Japan's Yoji Kuri, Canada's Graeme Ross and Hungary's Sándor Bekesi. Due to an unexpected interest from schools around the world, 28 films

were picked from films made by students of high school age and younger. (All but one, an Italian film, *L'Importante e partecipare* (The Importance is to Participate), which turned out to be an audience favorite, were screened separately.)

### Champions of Animation?

At the time, Fini expressed some disappointment with the way the event turned out. For instance, she did not really approve of the final selection of the 50 greatest animated films of all time selected (the "Champions of Animation") by an international committee of journalists, scholars, festival directors and scholars. She still dissents, feeling that the program lacked the balance and scope she originally envisioned. She recalled that, "We had two Fischingers and two by Alexeieff and Parker. [Most] were films that had recently been in the minds of people and not what we had considered the best films." She also disliked the addition of a special program, featuring "Walt Disney's Tribute to Sports Goofy."

Nevertheless, as I wrote at the time, the Olympiad was, "a real morale booster for the local animation community, giving its members a chance, once again, to be proud of being called animation artists." (Remember, this was at a time when the industry seemed to be in a state of collapse, with great amounts of work being shipped off to studios in East Asia.) I further noted that, "The events

widespread publicity and critical acclaim seemed to carry over to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's 'Enchanted Drawings' series; this history of Hollywood animation shorts has been consistently sold out, including the opening evening of silent films. ... After the opening night, a background man from Filmation came up to me glowing with pride, and said, 'Isn't it great, first the Olympiad and now this!' It was a comment that seemed to make the Olympiad worthwhile." And now, 12 years later, one must say that despite her misgivings, her effort was certainly very worthwhile.

### The Spirit of the Olympics

The following is a list of the 32 finalists of films made for the Olympiad of Animation in "The Spirit of the Olympics." In retrospect, the film most people remember seems to be Bruno Bozzetto's *Sigmund*, which shows how a little Viennese boy is affected by watching the Olympics on television. At the time, I also commended Graeme Ross' *1...2...3*, whose portrayal of what goes on in a high jumper's mind as he gets ready to do his stuff, had a funky wit all its own.



The Tale of Tales, Yuri Norstein, 1980.

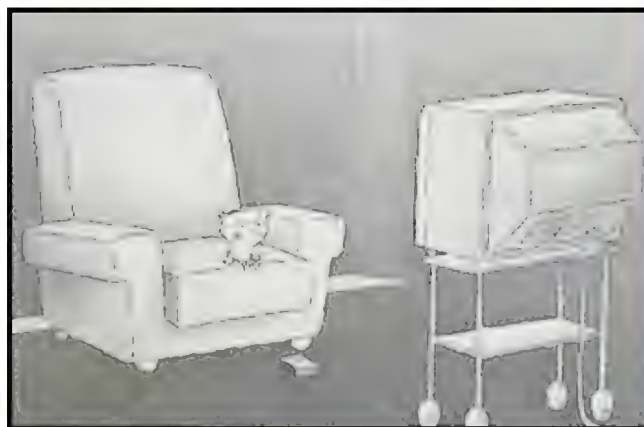


**Au bout du fil (The Cat's Cradle), Paul Driessen, 1974**

1. *1...2...3*, Graeme Ross, Canada
  2. *Olympia—La Linea 114*, Oswaldo Cavandoli, Italy
  3. *Sigmund*, Bruno Bozzetto, Italy
  4. *Olympic Fire*, V. Jiranek & Josef Hekrdla, Czechoslovakia
  5. *Games*, Hans Bacher, West Germany
  6. *Olympia*, Anna Maria Zoltan, Hungary
  7. *It's Not Whether You Win or Lose*, Rastko Iri, Yugoslavia
  8. *Olympiad I*, Marija Dail, USA
  9. *Olympic Boulevard*, Mark Hubley, USA
  10. *Victoria*, Lehotay Zoltan, Hungary
  11. *The Spirit*, Stephan Boeder, West Germany
  12. *Torch*, Wendy Vanguard, USA
  13. *Hors-Jeu*, Georges Schwisgebel, Switzerland
  14. *The Imagination of the Marathon Runners*, Yuji Kuri, Japan
  15. *The Spirit of the Olympics*, John Amitay, Canada
  16. *Animarathon*, Raul Garcia-Sanz, Spain
  17. *Spitzensport*, Any Coray, Switzerland
  18. *Blind Olympics*, Nancy Bens, Belgium
  19. *My Olympic Heroes*, Talent Barli, USA
  20. *Quitagulation*, Gregory Burns, USA
  21. *Road to the Olympics*, Rejean Bourdages & Shane Doyle, Canada
  22. *Olympics*, Gert Vergauwe, Belgium
  23. *Breth of Seth*, Melinda Littlejohn, USA
  24. *Olimpia Los Angeles 1984*, Csaba Szorady, Hungary
  25. *Running In*, Lesley Keen, Scotland
  26. *Alber-10*, Anders Holt, Sweden
  27. *The Flight*, Clara Basca & Gloria Canestrini, Italy
  28. *Rupert's Olympic Feet*, Larry Luria, USA
  29. *The Gallop*, Sandor Bekesi, Hungary
  30. *Torch Mural*, Tom Lapsley, USA
  31. *Muybridge in Motion*, Kenji Theil, USA
  32. *The Spirit of the Olympics*, Miguel A. Fuertes, Spain
1. *Skazka Skazok* (Tale of Tales), Yuri Norstein, USSR, 1980
  2. *The Street*, Caroline Leaf, Canada, 1976
  3. *The Yellow Submarine*, George Dunning, UK, 1968
  4. *Ruka* (The Hand), Jiri Trnka, Czechoslovakia, 1965
  5. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, David Hand, 1937
  6. *Crac!*, Frédéric Back, Canada, 1981
  7. *Une Nuit sur le Mont Chauve* (Night on Bald Mountain), Alexander Alexeieff & Claire Parker, 1933
  8. *Ubu*, Geoff Dunbar, UK, 1980
  9. *Moonbird*, John Hubley, USA, 1959
  10. *Satiemania*, Zdenko Gasparavic, Yugoslavia, 1978
  11. *Fantasia*, Walt Disney, USA, 1940
  12. *Neighbors*, Norman McLaren, Canada, 1952
  13. *Paysagiste* (Mindscape), Jacques Drouin, Canada, 1977
  14. *Duck Amuck*, Chuck Jones, USA, 1953
  15. *Premiere jours* (Beginnings), Clorinda Warny, Lina Gagnon & Suzanne Gervaise
  16. *Allegro non troppo*, Bruno Bozzetto, Italy, 1976

## The Champions Of Animation

The following is the list of the 50 highest scoring films in the Olympiad's poll of international journalists, scholars, festival directors and animation programmers. (Some 100 were actually asked to participate, but only 35 responded.) The results were tabulated on a weighted scale and only 32 films were actually screened (in whole or in part) during the event itself. Films with identical ratings indicate a tie.



**Olympiad of Animation film, Sigmund, Bruno Bozzetto, 1984.**

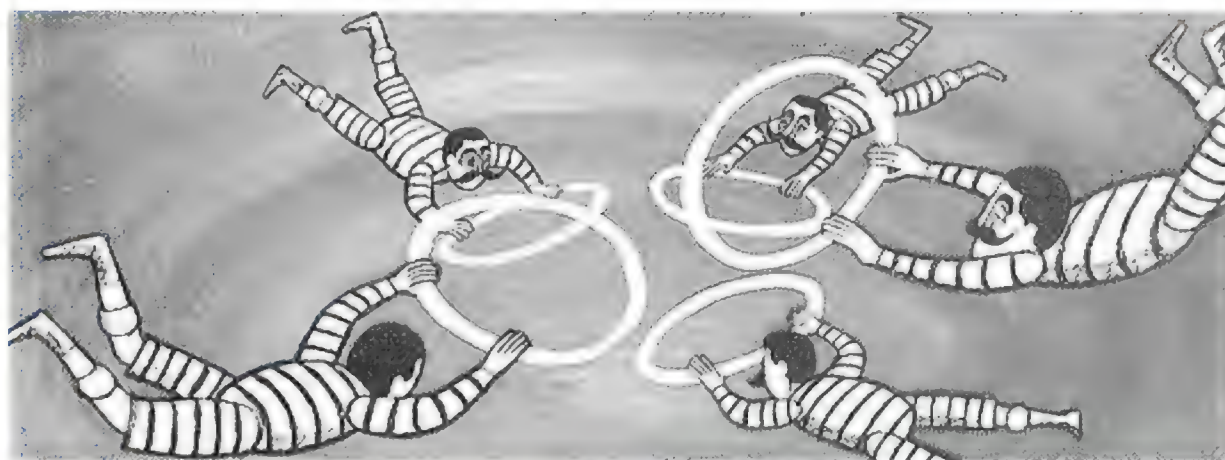




**Craci, Frédéric Back, 1981**

17. *Dojoji Temple*, Kihachiro Kawamoto, Japan, 1976
18. *King Size Canary*, Tex Avery, USA, 1947
19. *Motion Painting No. 1*, Oscar Fischinger, USA, 1949
20. *Tango*, Zbigniew Rybczynski, Poland, 1982
20. *La Joie de vivre* (Joy of Life), Anthony Gross & Hector Hoppin, France, 1934
22. *Harpya*, Raoul Servais, Belgium, 1979
22. *Allegretto*, Oscar Fischinger, USA, 1936
22. *Bad Luck Blackie*, Tex Avery, USA, 1949
25. *Frank Film*, Frank Mouris, USA, 1972
26. *L'idée* (The Idea), Berthold Bartosch, France, 1932
26. *What's Opera Doc?*, Chuck Jones, USA, 1957
26. *Blinkety Blank*, Norman McLaren, Canada, 1955
29. *Au bout du fil* (The Cat's Cradle), Paul Driessen, Canada, 1974
30. *Les Jeux des anges* (Game of Angels), Walerian Boroczyck, France, 1964
31. *Band Concert*, Walt Disney, USA, 1935
32. *Minnie the Moocher*, Dave Fleischer & Willard Bowsky, USA, 1932
33. *Dumbo*, Walt Disney, USA, 1942
34. *Une Vieille boîte* (An Old Box), Paul Driessen, Canada, 1975
35. *Pas de Deux*, Norman McLaren, Canada, 1967
36. *Le Chateau du sable* (Sandcastle), Co Hoedeman, Canada, 1977
37. *Great-I.K.B.*, Bob Godfrey, UK, 1974
38. *La Faim* (Hunger), Peter Foldes, Canada, 1974
39. *A Bogar* (The Fly), Ferenc Rofusz, Hungary, 1980
40. *Damon the Mower*, George Dunning, UK, 1971
41. *Lapis*, James Whitney, USA, 1966
42. *La Traversée de l'Atlantique à la Rame*, Jean-Françoise Laguionie, 1978
43. *Gerald McBoing Boing*, Robert Cannon, USA, 1951
44. *Jeu de coudes* (Elbow Game), Paul Driessen, Canada, 1979
44. *Steamboat Willie*, Ub Iwerks, USA, 1928
44. *Gertie the Dinosaur*, Winsor McCay, 1914
48. *Dnevnik* (Diary), Nedjelko Dragic, Yugoslavia, 1973
49. *Feholofia* (Son of the White Mare), Marcell Jankovics, Hungary, 1981
50. *La Vita in scatola* (Life in a Garbage Can), Bruno Bozzetto, Italy, 1967

*Harvey Deneroff, in addition to his duties as Editor of Animation World Magazine, edits and publishes The Animation Report, an industry newsletter.*



**Bill Hurtz' Logo Film for Olympiad of Animation based on Luzzati's poster.**

# Animation at the Olympics



by Mark Segall

Animation and the Olympics aren't two things you automatically associate. But back in 1984, during the Los Angeles games, the Olympic Arts Festival sponsored a four-day Olympiad of Animation—featuring screenings of a selection of the best animated films of all time and films especially made for the event that were shown at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences in Beverly Hills. And this past March, animators all over the US opened their ASIFA newsletters to find the following call for entries:

"Art Culture and Technology (ACT) is seeking animated works by independent filmmakers, to be shown as part of a huge multimedia installation to run throughout the Olympics (July 19 to August 4)."

The ads mentioned a \$250 honoraria for each work that was accepted, and a

modest \$10 entry fee. Entry requirements weren't strict: any film fitting one of two broad

Promoting independent animation has been part of ACT's mission from the start.

themes—Bodies in Motion and Building Communities—could be entered; films could be old or new, and filmmakers could send one entry or several. The shows' tentative location (the Underground

Atlanta Mega - Mall) was likely to see a lot of Olympic foot traffic. While 84's Olympiad had the cachet of an official connection to the Olympics, ACT offered animators something just as important—the chance to be part of permanent installations in Atlanta and New York long after the games were over.

Like its parent organization, the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, ACT is devoted to cultural exchange between countries. Its FAF's high-tech branch: where

crafts, folklore and humanities meet the new media. Promoting independent animation has been part of ACT's mission from the start. During 1995's Fourth World Women's conference, ACT showed a program on Beijing Train Station's 120-square meter Jumbotron screen: film and video by women artists, including animators Faith Hubley and Joanna Priestley.



**Kakania by Karen Aqua**  
Courtesy of ACT



## An Overarching Concern

For the Atlanta event, besides running ads and announcements, ACT mailed out 600 or 700 entry forms. Response from the animation community was enthusiastic. Submissions came to producer Iva Kaufman's Manhattan office from all over the US and Canada and as far away as France. Iva, curator Somi Roy and assistant curator Amy Morley viewed over 50 videotapes, and finally chose around 20 for the installation. An overarching concern was to choose films suitable to an international, multilingual audience—films that do not rely on dialogue or narration to get their point across.

Beyond that, different pieces were chosen for different reasons. Some fit well into a videowall or multimedia set-up—what you might call ambient animation—abstract loops of color and sound. Some covered social issues—smoking, violence, ecological destruction, the rights of women and children. Emily Hubley contributed *Enough*, a grant-you-three-wishes

fable about greed. Others were picked because they typified a particular culture or place—Sharon Shimazu's *Mr. Right*, Debra Callabresi's *Quilted by Hand*. Films aimed at children were highlighted along with films by animators age 15 or younger. The most energetically animated pieces, such as Karen Aqua's stunningly choreographed *Perpetual Motion* and *Kakania*, fit the Bodies in Motion theme. Some

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The idea is to create a new revenue stream for arts funding—to funnel for-profit money into non-profit projects.

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do not fit any of the themes perfectly, but were picked just because they made Iva and Amy laugh—John R. Dilworth's *Dirty Birdy*, John Schnall's *Buy My Film*, Nancy Keeagan's *Sophie*. The animations will be part of a multimedia installation along with documentaries, experimental films, and video and mul-



Atlanta Lowdown by Bob Hutchinson  
Courtesy of ACT

timedia works. After the Mall management changed its mind about having the show, Ms. Kaufman lined up a new venue: the 3,000 square foot library at the Atlanta College of Art's Woodruff Arts Center. The move from the Mall may lose ACT a few sports fans, but puts the installation closer to a museum, a symphony hall and many Olympics-related arts and cultural events. Engineered and designed by ACT's Howard Weiner and David Miller, the installation has the sponsorship of Shaw Ross Importers & Distributors (fine wine & spirits) of Miami, Florida.

## StreetSmart

The Olympic selections will also be part of ACT's most ambitious post-Olympics project: supplying the content for soon-to-be-installed StreetSmart kiosks in NYC. Twenty-five percent of ACT's contribution will be animation, the other 75% a mix of videos, documentaries and other arts-related material. The first five kiosks will be at City Hall and the Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx and Staten Island borough halls. Ultimately there will be 50 throughout town, their material



Smoking on the Hush, Hush Tip by John Serpentelli, students from John B. Turner School, Prints on Progress, and the University of Pennsylvania of Nursing  
Courtesy of ACT

tailored to different cultures and available in several languages. People will be able to mail order the animations they see from the kiosks. ACT will also raise revenues for future projects by selling kiosk advertising. The idea, says Iva Kaufmann, is to create a new rev-

post-Olympics sites for the Atlanta reel in Chicago, Washington, D.C., Miami and San Francisco, and is scouting other major US cities. Internationally, the selections will be shown at the Beijing Train Station, and other large public spaces in Asia and Europe. They

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Some films do not fit any of the themes, but were picked because they made us laugh.

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enue stream for arts funding—to funnel for-profit money into non-profit projects. If successful, the kiosks will be displayed in other cities. The animations will also appear at Studio 64, a spacious arts-oriented meeting place scheduled to open in New York's Chelsea district in August.

Nationally, ACT has lined up

may also eventually appear on the Web; both Friendship Ambassadors Foundation and ACT plan to have websites up and running this fall. ACT material has been and will continue to be part of the EarthPledge (<http://www.earthpledge.org/>) and EarthChannel (<http://www.earthchannel.com/>) sites.

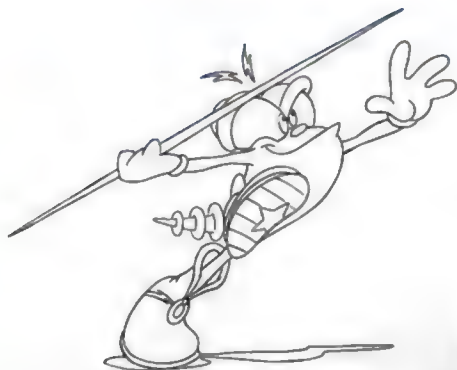
*Mark Segall is a writer who specializes in labor journalism and public service. He co-authored How To Make Love To Your Money (Delacorte, 1982) with his wife, Margaret Tobin. This Fall, he will become Editor of ASIFA-East's aNYmator newsletter, which he currently designs and writes for.*

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Film Roman's version of Izzy.  
© 1993 ACOG

# The Great Adventures of Izzy — An Olympic Hero

Kids across the US and around the world love Izzy! At least that's what the people at the Atlanta Olympic Games would like you to believe. After all, Izzy is the much-publicized mascot of the Atlanta Games, whose persona has appeared on a whole range of merchandise; he also appears as the star of his own animated TV special, *Izzy's Quest For Olympic Gold*, something of a first for an Olympic mascot.

Izzy was unveiled as a "simple little mascot" during the closing ceremony of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. Officials of the Atlanta Games turned to children around the United States to help define the character who was only known up until then as "Whatizit." Their final choice was Izzy, after the judges considered such other names as Jimmy Nastics, Link D. World, and I. M. There. Now that Izzy was alive, another contest was held where children were called upon to write stories about Izzy as their new Olympic hero. The "Great Adventures of Izzy" writing campaign began in October 1993 and more 85,000 children wrote

stories for Izzy, many of which will be displayed during the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia.

As part of the effort to market Izzy, the Atlanta Centennial Olympic Properties (ACOP) decided to star him in an animated television special. (ACOP is the marketing arm of The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic

Games.) ACOP finally selected Film Roman, the North Hollywood studio, known for such animated stars as Garfield and Bart Simpson, as the "official studio" for the 1996 Olympic Games—something of a first in both Olympic and animation history.

Carol Corwin, producer for *Izzy's Quest For Olympic Gold*, recalls that ACOP's selected Film Roman because, "they liked the fact that we were a modest company and [studio head] Phil Roman stays involved throughout the whole process. We were honored to be chosen. Everyone felt proud to be involved on the Izzy project because our quality standards matched ACOP's."

Phil Roman, Film Roman's President and CEO, commented that, "When ACOP first approached us, we didn't think Izzy was an animatable character. We needed to add spunk and energy. That required creating a full personality in addition to an appealing friendly look. It needed to be eye-catching and captivating not only to children, but adults need to be drawn to it as well".



*Izzy's Quest For Olympic Gold*  
© 1993 ACOG

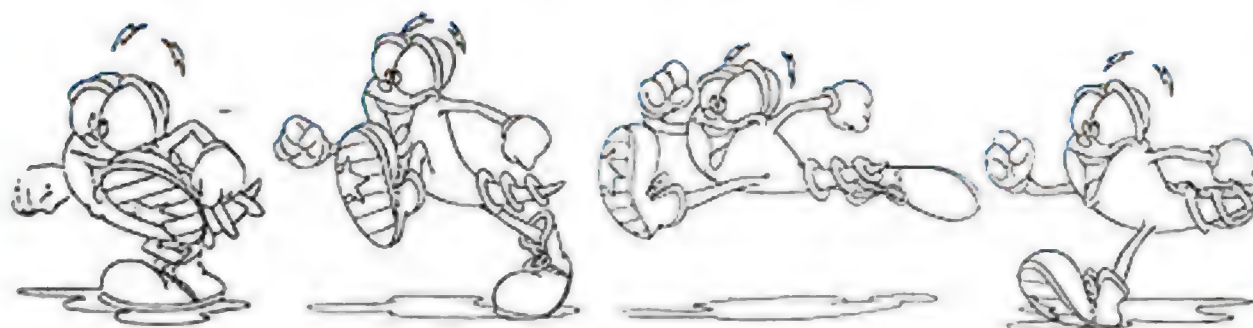
However, any change to Izzy's design needed to be subtle, since the character had already been widely licensed and merchandise distributed. With the help of animators Guy Vasilovick and Roger Sciasson, the studio put together a 40 second pilot for ACOP which showed Izzy going through a range of animated movements. From playing tennis to throwing a javelin to gymnastics, trying to imbue Izzy with exuberance and energy; in so doing, they had him morph his body into different shapes to facilitate each activity. They also added a nose to Izzy's

of the Olympic Games, and the Torch, shining bright. Never one to just go with the flow (that's why I like him), Izzy causes an uproar

**We came up with a look to give him more life, a personality and warmth.**

when he wants to leave the Torch to be a part of the Olympic Games he had heard so much about. Izzy must prove himself worthy and learn important lessons about the purpose and history of the games by earning the five Olympic

many stories submitted by from children around the United States. Scriptwriter, Cindy McCay worked closely with Holly Rawlinson at ACOP to create a "back life" for Izzy, adding his family, friends and Tribunal Elders giving reality to the Torch World. Both Film Roman and ACOP wanted the special to be educational, yet entertaining for children. Carol Corwin explained; "While we were brainstorming, we decided to cut out some of Izzy's speeches because it got too boring. It was a tough balance between teaching about the Olympics and keeping it fun and



**Izzy, the official character of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games** © 1993 ACOP

face and fixed up his teeth a bit. Roman explained that, "We came up with a look to give him more life, a personality and warmth. We needed to change the character to make him more workable for animation. Izzy needed more punch and I think we did a good job of it".

The special, *Izzy's Quest For Olympic Gold*, aired on Atlanta-based Turner Network Television (TNT) on August 12, 1995 as a two-part show, and has also been distributed internationally. It begins with Izzy, a mischievous teenager who lives in a whimsical world inside the Olympic Torch. In this land, the people—called Whatizits—are charged with the responsibility of keeping the spirit

Rings—Perseverance, Integrity, Sportsmanship, Excellence and Brotherhood. (This meaning comes from a story session at Film Roman. In fact, the rings stand for the colors of the five continents participating in the Olympics.)

The idea of Izzy and his Torch World did come about from the

exciting."

*Izzy's Quest For Olympic Gold* conveys to children the message that the Olympics are not some boring event that their parents watch on TV and effectively promotes the values of perseverance, determination, and integrity. While not filled with the cutting edge sensibilities of some of the films that embellished the 1984 Olympiad of Animation, the show is nevertheless an honest, if modest effort that hopefully will inspire future Olympics-related animated efforts.

*Frankie Kowalski is Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine and is currently on ASIFA-Hollywood's Board of Directors.*



**Film Roman's version of Izzy.**

© 1993 ACOP



# “So, What Was It Like?” The Other Side of Animation’s Golden Age

by Tom Sito

**M**ost animators begin as animation fans. Seated in front of our TVs with heavily sugared cereal dribbling down our chins, we marvel at the adventures of Bugs, Casper and Scooby Doo. Then one day we decide to apply our desire to draw into becoming an animator. Just like ballplayers dream of becoming a Ruth or Cobb, we dream of being the next Bob Clampett or Chuck Jones.

People want to cherry-pick their history to suit their opinions or agenda.

I was fortunate that during the time of my entering the field, one could still learn at the side of many of the great artists of the Golden Age of Hollywood animation. In 1975, it was still possible to assist John Hubley, Shamus Culhane or

Ken Harris. Sadly, these and other legends are passing from the stage leaving us orphans with the films and, if we are lucky, some memories of what it was like.

I think a lot of us today have the impression that Golden Age Animation was done in a state of bliss. Modern Animators complain about ignorant and grasping corporations, tight deadlines and studio politics. Back then it was an Art, today it's just Business. In the



UPA studios, March, 1957

Top row: Dick Shaw, Morey Fagan, Ed Friedman, Gil Turner, Barney Posner, Bob Dranko, E. Bennet  
Bottom row: Bob McIntosh, Al Wade, Peter Burness (holding Oscar for *When Magoo Flew*), Rudy Larriva, Bob Brown

Courtesy of Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists, IATSE Local 839.

good old days animators lived on their love of cartoons, ate ambrosia and had no deadlines or headaches. Obviously, that is why Pinocchio and Tom & Jerry cartoons were so good. Never mind Hitler, the Depression, or Jim Crow, it was all one long party. This naive view is encouraged by all these revisionist, Wasn't Hollywood Wacky?? books and documentaries corporations fund nowadays.

### How It Really Was

**W**ell, I hate to burst your bubble, but just take the time to chat with some of our great retired gods and goddesses and they'll tell you how it really was. Oh, I'm not denying that compared to any steelworker or being on a breadline their kind of job was a dream. Still, every animator then as now soon finds that, in the end, cartoons are a business just like anything else.

The first revelation that shocked me was how, before the animation unions started around 1937, animators had a six day work week. Nine to 6:00, Monday through Friday, and 9:00 to 1:00

In the good old days animators lived on their love of cartoons, ate ambrosia and had no deadlines or headaches. Never mind Hitler, the Depression, or Jim Crow, it was all one long party.

on Saturday. If you had a problem with Saturdays, Max Fleischer or Walt Disney would let you work Thursdays until 11:00 p.m. to make up the time. Disney and most studios went to 40 hours in January 1941, in an attempt to stop their artists from unionizing; and the same thing has been happening right now at many



Warner Bros. Studios, Friz Freleng Unit, 1954

Back Row: Ray Young, Ted Bonicksen, Gerry Chiniquy.

Front Row: Bob Matz, Warren Batchelder, Art Davis, John Brandt, Sid Farren

Picture courtesy of Bob Matz and Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists, IATSE Local 839.

nonunion computer houses, for the same reason.

Time clocks were once standard. At MGM, there was an electric bell that told you when you could get up from your desk for a coffee break, and also told you (15 minutes later) when to come back to work. When I was at Hanna Barbera in 1978, the time clock was out of use (it kept having "acci-

supposedly read it at the end of the month and have your head. On any morning, at 8:28 a.m., you could see people literally running up Cahuenga Blvd. to avoid this fate. I never actually heard of anyone being fired for that reason.

In the silent film days, the Bray Studio didn't pay its artists until Monday, because Mrs. Bray wanted to make sure their artists would not spend all their money on drink over the weekend and possibly not show up on Monday. In 1976, at the Raggedy Ann Studio, our employer wouldn't pay us until Friday at 5:00 p.m., because he distrusted us to stay all day. Many of us repaid his respect for us by stealing our pencil sharpeners.

In the 1930s, vacations were unheard of and overtime was rarely paid. Disney animator Claire Weeks told me that, on *Snow White's* deadline rush, the studio demanded 3 hours extra a night and the only pay was a 55 cent dinner ticket to Blackie's Steakhouse on Sunset Blvd. (Of course,

dents," like people pouring cel paint into it), but it remained in effect at Disney up until the *The Little Mermaid*. So instead of the timeclock at Hanna Barbera we also had "The Late Book," in which the security guard would write your name if you arrived five minutes past the 8:30 a.m. check in time; the powers that be would



55 cents could probably buy you a good dinner in 1937...) The Van Beuren Studio in 1935 asked for "voluntary" unpaid overtime, which was in fact something less than voluntary. In 1947, instead of overtime Paul Terry gave you oranges from his Florida orange grove. Today, many digital CGI houses speak to their artists of the "reality" of the 55 hour workweek.

### A Free-For-All

In 1941, before the union, people's wages were a free-for-all and ranged from \$500 a week for a top animator like Art Babbitt, down to \$12 for a painter. Babbitt used to augment his assistant's salary out of his own pocket, because the man could not afford to feed his family. New trainees like Warner Bros legends Virgil Ross and Paul Smith were hired at \$6.00 a week, up to \$10.00 after one month. Painter Martha Sigal told me she was hired by Leon Schlesinger at \$12.75. After one year she was called a journeyman and raised to \$21.00 (inkers were paid \$23.00); after that, no more raises were allowed. Some companies set policies about raises, but mostly you had to go haggle like a Bedouin camel trader. And if you asked for a change in these conditions, like a worker's council or union, you were branded a "Lousy Red."

There were no black animators until 1954. Max Fleischer promoted Lillian Friedman as the first woman animator and paid her \$40 a week, while her male col-



Paul Halliday (center with hat) on picket line during 1937 Fleischer strike.

Photo courtesy of Harvey Deneroff.

leagues made up to \$125. Despite some standouts like Mary Blair or Laverne Harding, women mostly were kept as ink & painters until modern times. Hispanic and Asian artists fared better—Bill Melendez,

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Every animator soon finds that, in the end, cartoons are a business just like anything else.

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Rudy Zamora, Ty Wong or Chris Ishi faced no barriers based on their ethnicity.

The great 1941 strike for union recognition at Walt Disney was considered animation's own Civil War and has left hard feelings down to this day. Picketers later to achieve fame included John Hubley (Mr. Magoo), Hank Ketcham (*Dennis the Menace*), Walt Kelly (Pogo), Bill Melendez (*A Charlie Brown Christmas*), and Bill

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Some companies set policies about raises, but mostly you had to go haggle like a Bedouin camel trader.

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Hurtz (*Rocky and Bullwinkle*). One little factoid most pro-management histories of the strike omit, was while the Disney Strike was contentious and ruined the family atmosphere for a time, everyone's wages doubled overnight.

Today, animators complain that the producers who control their destinies know nothing about animation. They're all from some corporation or defense contractor. Well, in the Golden

Age, Leon Schlesinger was an executive from Pacific Title who helped Warner Bros. get funding for *The Jazz Singer* and so got the cartoon contract. Layout artist Bob Givens told me that Leon's most oft spoken phrase was, "I'm going to Palm Springs for the week and f\*&% you all!?" Other bon mots included his order to, "Put in more Purple! Purple is a funny color!?" After he retired, Warner's replaced him with Eddie Seltzer, whose only experience was arranging publicity roadshows with leggy beauties. In 1944 Chuck Jones was finally introduced to the legendary Jack Warner, who said, "I don't know what the f\*&% you guys do, all I know is we make Mickey Mouse!"

MGM's Fred Quimby was a minor executive of whom one artist said, "Fred was a nice man, but as far as animation went, he didn't know his ass from a hot brick." Yet when director Hugh Harman complained to him in 1937 that he was getting too much interference from above and demanded more independence, Quimby showed him the door.

When Steve Bosustow left UPA,



**Leon Schlesinger-Freleng Unit, 1940.**

**Back row:** Dick Thompson, Carl Dalton, Sam Nicholson, Ken Champin, Lenard Kester, Gerry Chiniquy, Dick Bickenbach, Al Tarter, Gil Turner, Friz Freleng.

**Leaning over:** John Kennedy.

**Front row:** Les Larson, Dave Brown, Constantin Lebedef, Manuel Perez, Herman Cohen, Bob Matz

Courtesy of Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists, IATSE Local 839.

Columbia replaced him with Henry Saperstein, who also knew nothing about animation.

### Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

**O**n *The Little Mermaid*, my wife Pat, who is a checker, was remarking talking to an older colleague on how all the useless executives who walk around the studio looking terribly important that today we call "suits." The old timer said that on *Bambi* they called them "The Walk-Around-Boys." Yet, of course, on every cartoon these producers are the most prominently displayed in the credits. Sic transit Gloria Mundi.

Animators today complain if their desk isn't as well made as a Disney classic, or they don't have a window view. At New York's Raoul Barré Studio in the roaring 20s, there were no curtains, rugs or heat during the winter, and animators went home when their fin-

gers got too cold to draw. In the 1930s, Fleischer, Terry and Schlesinger used to equip their studios with used office furniture and kitchen tables bought at garage sales. No wonder artists who went to Disney's Hyperion studio or MGM were amazed! The furniture all matched!

One painter told me the first thing that impressed her about going from Termite Terrace to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1943 was that at MGM they took the trash out every day! In Toronto, Nelvana's first large building was a former cheese factory on the waterfront. Everytime you opened a door, you got a whiff of some ancient Stilton. During the winter, ropes were hung on the side of the building so you wouldn't get blown into icy Lake Ontario on your way to work.

At Disney's, until *The Great Mouse Detective*, you had to pitch

in money to pay for coffee and bottled water, and you had to pay rent for your parking space! (Some famous comic book companies charged novices rent for their

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While the Disney Strike was contentious and ruined the family atmosphere for a time, everyone's wages doubled overnight.

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desks, but that's another article). And who remembers that at Filmation when you needed a new pencil from Munchie the equipment guy, you first had to turn in your used stubbs!

Every studio had a footage quota—at Schlesingers in 1940, it was 23 feet a week and at Disney's it was 5; when MGM went union the same year, Fred Quimby angrily raised the quota to 25 feet a week and kept his dreaded "footage book"; this ledger, of course, could then be used against you when you went in to ask for a raise. Animator Rudy Zamora responded by figuring out where Quimby's office was and started to practice bowling on the floor above. Another early commercial studio had every animator's name up on a large chart; everytime someone screwed up, a check was placed next to his name. You can guess the fate of the artist with the most checks.

### A Friendly Witness

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Eddie Seltzer's only experience was arranging publicity roadshows with leggy beauties.

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Those who feel animation was immune to the pressures of national politics should remember when Walt Disney was a friendly witness at the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1947. He denounced the Screen Cartoonists Guild as being "infiltrated with communists." One Rocky and Bullwinkle director told me it was common knowledge in Hollywood, at the time, that for \$5,000 paid to certain politicians, your

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The time clock kept having "accidents," like people pouring cel paint into it.

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Committee dossier would be moved to the bottom of the pile, or even lost. Meanwhile, at progressive UPA, studio director Steve Bosustow was given a list of undesirable (i.e., politically incorrect) artists by distributor Columbia Pictures who were to be fired.

In 1954, columnist Walter Winchell denounced Tempo, a commercial animation studio in New York, of past communist affiliation (the company was run by former union leaders). The F.B.I. investigated and even though nothing was ever proved, Tempo lost its clients and laid off 50 artists.

I'm not trying to blacken anyone's memories or achievements. Much already has been written of the studios with baseball diamonds, parties and volleyball courts. Max Fleischer gave all his animators a bonus of \$500 for Christmas in 1931. Disney gave his artists free art lessons and made his top animators rich with stock options. They all came to love our art form as we artists do. I'm merely trying to see the past with a

more balanced eye. No matter what the conditions were, these artists still created magic and the entrepreneurs took chances that produced the great cartoons we grew up on and still cherish. I once asked *Snow White* veteran Joe Grant, "What's the real difference between 1940 and today?" He replied that, "Ah, much is the same. Same deadlines, same politics, people drew better back then."

Many today like to forget that the great artists of the past were also great supporters of the union and stuck together to fight for what they wanted. People want to cherry-pick their history to suit their opinions or agenda. I celebrate the complete legacy. Like those great union agitators Groucho Marx, James Cagney, Boris Karloff, King Vidor, Frank Capra and Joan Crawford, do honor to the efforts of Chuck Jones, Bill Melendez, Art Babbitt, Ben Washam and Bill Tytla on behalf of animator's rights.

Most of us enter the field of animation not to get rich, but for the love of the art. We just have learned over the years that when it comes to the business end of our profession we must learn to keep our hearts inspired but our heads out of the clouds. And I think that the last and greatest lesson our past masters can teach us is, "It was ever so."

*Tom Sito is an animator at DreamWorks and is President of the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union (Local 839 IATSE), in North Hollywood.*

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by Howard Beckerman

# When the Bunny Speaks, I Listen

If Bugs Bunny states, in a television commercial, that a product is worth having, I believe him. Does this surprise you? You say that he is a trickster rabbit with a Brooklyn accent, streetwise and unpredictable and shouldn't be relied upon for value judgments. Well, hold on there! Would you rather trust live actors who spout whatever stuff is written for them, people who get paid handsomely to extoll a product this week and another the next?

Bugs, or Daffy, Donald or Goofy are more honest. For one thing, they are always who they are, thanks to the foresight of their creators. We recognize and admire cartoon characters because they are so definitely in character. Bugs Bunny is Bugs Bunny and Bart Simpson is Bart Simpson. In the movie *Braveheart*, Mel Gibson plays the historical character William Wallace and in other films he plays fictitious personalities. Mel Gibson works hard to make us believe that he is all of those people. In actuality he is none of them. Bugs Bunny is always Bugs Bunny. A cartoon character's personality is all that he has. He has no blood, no bone, no home, no spouse, no child and no bank account. When the commercial is finished, he doesn't dash off to a posh Beverly Hills retreat. Contrary to the image



Bugs Bunny in the 1940s.  
© Warner Bros.

of Toon-Town, portrayed in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, where cartoon characters supposedly reside in their off-hours, these celluloid beings exist only for the screen. They have only one thing to give— themselves.

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A cartoon character's personality is all that he has.

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You say, "See, that proves that they're not real!" Not so. Collectors today are falling all over themselves paying handsome prices for

animation cels. To gallery-goers, cels from animation films are the real thing. When they head home clutching the shiny likenesses of Mickey, Pluto or Woody, they know that they have obtained the actual elements of a classic cartoon. You can't take Clint Eastwood or Mel Gibson home. I don't suggest that you try it, I don't think Meryl Streep or Arnold Schwarzenegger would tolerate being hung on the wall of your den.

## A Matter of Trust

Cartoon characters are the only personalities you can trust. Compare Bugs Bunny, with all his artful ways, to politicians (Nixon: "I am not a crook"), athletes (O.J. Simpson), corporations ("cigarettes are not addictive"), or even your next door neighbor ("I'll return your lawnmower as soon as I'm finished using it"). Characters exist solely to entertain us, not to take anything from us, nor to deceive us. They give us joy and laughter, and they present a mirror for us to see ourselves. Granted, all characters are not capable of this.

Some lack the solid attributes of Bugs, Donald or Popeye, each of whom sprang from the persistence and perspiration of cartoonists and animators seeking a means of expressing human



I don't think Meryl Streep or Arnold Schwarzenegger would tolerate being hung on the wall of your den.

foibles. Each of the popular cartoon personalities that we take seriously—and we do—have been imbued with solid, recognizable traits. I don't trust Roger Rabbit, or the Smurfs, or Strawberry Shortcake, or any character that was conceived by a cold, logical committee. I'm sure you could compile your own list of cartoon beings that lack the attributes of strength, certainty and believability. The characters that I know to be true are those that derive from human experience. I trust in characters that grew over the years, not those that are created full-blown with a ready group of side-kicks and groaning shelves of licensed toys and wash cloths.

### Grown From Native Soil

**B**ugs, Donald, Pluto, Goofy, Betty and Daffy began as incidental characters in cartoons. They developed slowly and learned to be who they are. They

were grown from the native soil of studios clustered in New York and Hollywood, from places called Broadway and Termites Terrace. In today's movie environment, they are better known and more easily recognized than most contemporary live actors. Study any current nonanimated feature, and you'll see how the obstacles placed in

television advertising and frenetic music videos, films from earlier decades gloried in showing off the stars. The cameras of the 1920s, 30s and 40s expended long, leisurely moments exploring actors' faces. The camera loved them, and so did the audiences, enraptured by the shadow of a feminine cheekbone or the dynamic thrust

of a manly chin. This delight in the stars was what brought people to the movies. Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich, Vivien Leigh, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Charles Laughton, Errol Flynn, Katherine Hepburn, Judy Garland, Clark Gable, Ingrid Bergman, Humphrey Bogart, Bette Davis, Spencer Tracy, among others, were shown to perfection on the screen. The filmed stories might have



Duck Amuck by Chuck Jones 1953

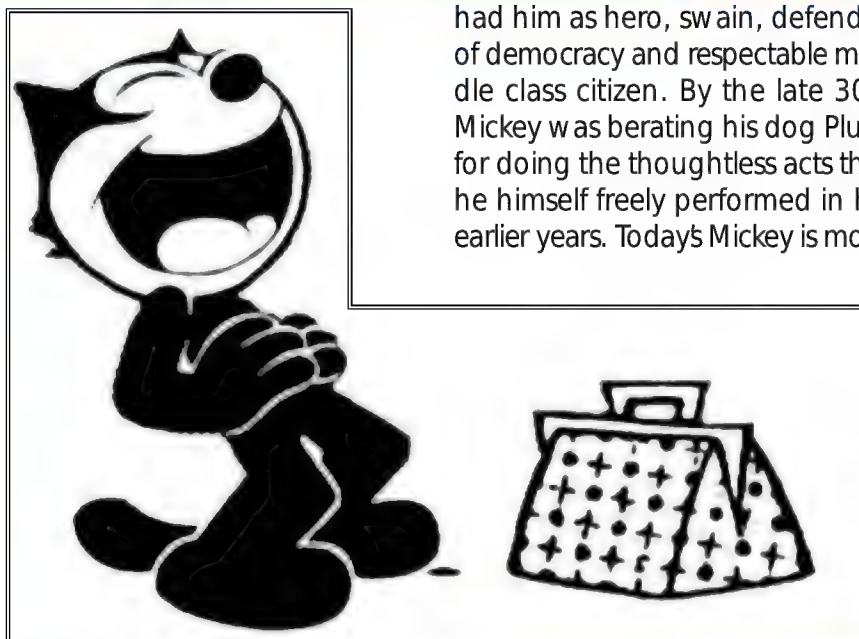
© 1953 Warner Bros.

the way of flesh and blood actors keep them from easy recognition. Every scene is either a special effects extravaganza overshadowing any human presence, or is a compilation of quick cuts from the uniform face of one hero to the bland visage of another, coming so fast that the viewer is left wondering who's who. It was not always so.

Though current movies thrive on fast cuts and other editing techniques borrowed from anxious

seemed to be about Robin Hood, Captain Bligh or Scarlet O'Hara, but they were actually about the actors, whose smooth flesh and twinkling eyes were projected lovingly, three stories high.

I don't trust Roger Rabbit, or the Smurfs, or Strawberry Shortcake, or any character that was conceived by a cold, logical committee.



**Felix the Cat from Joe Oriolo's TV series**

© Felix the Cat Productions

had him as hero, swain, defender of democracy and respectable middle class citizen. By the late 30s, Mickey was berating his dog Pluto for doing the thoughtless acts that he himself freely performed in his earlier years. Today's Mickey is more

owed by the stronger personalities of Donald and Goofy.

Another character that has lost touch with audiences and who has long been in retirement, is Mr. Magoo, the wonderful little man from UPA. Magoo was a "real" character in a sea of anthropomorphic stand-ups and his popularity brought a refreshing appreciation for the depictions of humans in cartoons, but today he is barely remembered. Live comedy stars like Buster Keaton experienced the same callous disregard in their careers, though Keaton, in his last years, was able to make a brief comeback. This might happen to Magoo, but his subtle Quixote-like humor may be too intellectual for audiences seeking the accepted stupidities of Beavis and Butt-Head.

Probably the greatest cartoon character of all, Felix The Cat. While he is one of the earliest animated stars, he is still dragged out periodically. Felix in the 1920s was the personification of cartoon heroes. His basic, bouncy, black

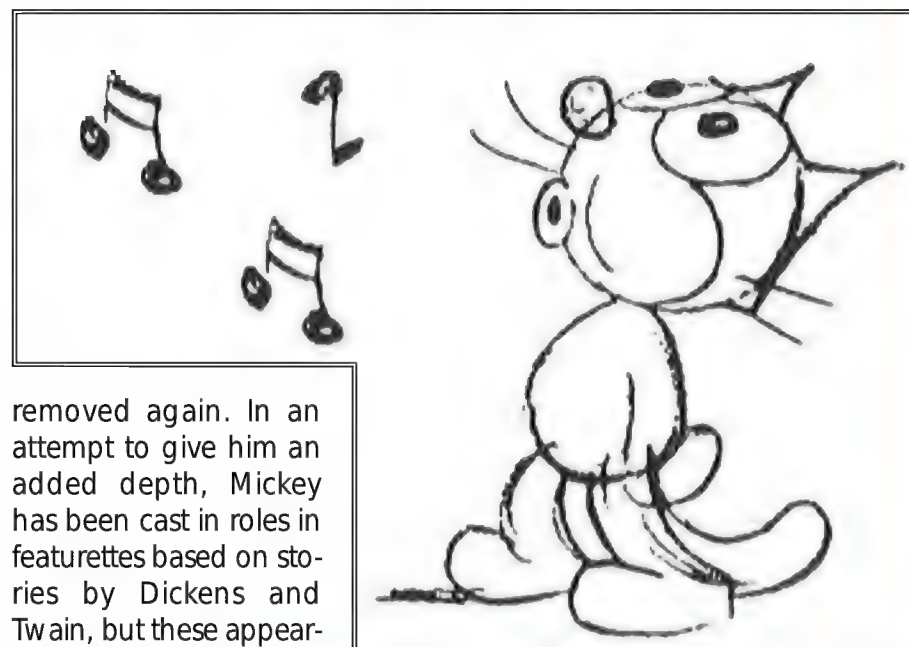
Movie personalities of those more relaxed times didn't—wouldn't—contend with the short bursts of screen time, rarely more than 10 seconds in any shot, that is the hallmark of today's moviemaking. Even Bugs, Mickey, Donald and Daffy could not compete with Greta, Ingrid, Errol and Humphrey. But, that has all changed, now it is the brightly hued faces of cartoon characters that audiences adore. Does anyone wear a T-shirt with the likenesses of Mel Gibson, Tom Cruise or Clint Eastwood? It's doubtful, but Mel, Tom and Clint are probably wearing Disney decorated jockey shorts at this very moment.

### The Burden of Stardom

Still, it is not easy for cartoon personalities to carry the burden of stardom. Mickey Mouse, for instance, has experienced numerous changes and shadings of character. Starting in 1928, as a rowdy, ratty hieroglyphic, pulling pig's tails to elicit sounds, the roles that followed

Today's Mickey is more corporate symbol than screen presence.

corporate symbol than screen presence. Over the years, the front office has had his eyes redesigned more than once, and his tail has been toyed with constantly. It's been removed, replaced and



removed again. In an attempt to give him an added depth, Mickey has been cast in roles in featurettes based on stories by Dickens and Twain, but these appearances were overshadowed

**Felix the Cat, the Otto Messmer/Pat Sullivan version.**



and white shape was the first to elicit a personality. Felix pondered and made decisions. He knew how to turn a drawn palm tree into a banjo or unscrew his tail for use as a telescope. Felix was the first character to reveal creative intelligence, traits rarely championed in his various reappearances on television. The problem for Felix, Mickey and Magoo is that they are products of their respective times, and because their times

A "What's up Doc"  
or a "You're despicable!"  
comes to us from the  
depths of a cartoon soul.

are no more, reincarnations/updated versions are doomed to failure. Attempts at updating cartoon heroes is as fruitless as Steve Martin's recreation of Phil Silver's classic Sgt. Bilko character. No amount of technological icing can supplant the magnificent low-tech originals. Felix, for instance, belongs in black-and-white and

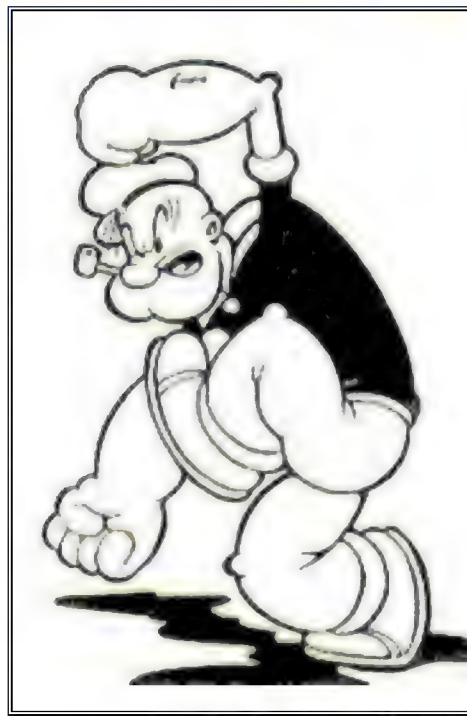


**Sylvester**  
© Warner Bros.

silence. Giving him a voice is as unsatisfying as putting Nikes on Michelangelo's David. Mr. Magoo reflects the wit and subtlety of the stylized 1950s. If he returned to function in today's violent movie atmosphere, minus his walking stick, but totting a Uzi instead, he might wonder why he was clutching a fly swatter.

Still, no matter what their problems, cartoon characters are the most honest and trustworthy on the lot. They speak from the heart. A "What's up Doc" or a "You're despicable!" from one of them, comes to us from the depths of a cartoon soul. I believe that these figures, these cherished images, no matter what their foibles and strange habits are among the finest of people. Their presence is reassuring and comforting in a world of uncertainty. Their strength as personalities rises above the crass commercialization that they are subjected to.

The likenesses of cartoon characters are on everything we own, but no amount of studio hype can get us to truly love them. We love them, not for their press releases but for who they are. It has been said that the connection that binds audience and star is a mysterious one and can't be dissected. I disagree. I see no mystery in the notion that we respond positively to the lack of pretension, the native cleverness and the strong survival instincts of a Bugs Bunny or a Bart Simpson. More to the point, we love cartoon people because they are like us, and characters that most



**Popeye the Sailor Man (1933)**  
© King Features

reflect our own feelings are the ones to whom we give our undying trust. It is no more than the simple recognition between beings, them and us, of things we have in common. So, when the Bunny speaks, I listen.

*Howard Beckerman is an animator, storyman and director, who began his career in 1949 working for Terry-Toons and Paramount with such cartoon characters as Mighty Mouse, Heckle and Jeckle, Popeye and Casper the Friendly Ghost. He worked for UPA and for many years wrote and animated television commercials, educational and corporate films. His articles on animation have appeared in numerous magazines and currently teaches at The Parsons School of Design and The School of Visual Arts in New York. He is presently completing a book on animation history and technique.*

# No Matter What Garfield Speaks Your Language

by Pam Schechter

**A**nimated characters tie the world together much like a common language. It is almost a given that children, no matter where they live, understand and enjoy Disney characters, whether seen in cartoons or on the myriad pieces of licensed merchandise that are widely available. For adults, Homer Simpson, Mickey Mouse and even Beavis and Butt-Head bring out similar smiles.

I remember during my first visit to Europe, seeing a Snoopy poster in a shop in Rome. It showed Snoopy as "Joe Falchetto," dancing with his paws raised high. I immediately felt a strong sense of familiarity as I gazed at Joe Cool's image, even though I did not speak Italian. In that instant, the world became a smaller place. I was reminded once again that animated characters have become a lingua franca. As such, we do not need words to enjoy a character on a T-shirt, poster or hat.

This year, almost \$95 billion will be generated in worldwide revenues from the sale of licensed products. A hefty chunk of these dollars will come from the merchandising of animated characters.



Garfield and Friends  
© Film Roman

Some can be worn,  
some displayed and  
some consumed.

## Screen Savers and Pacifiers

**W**hen *The Simpsons* went on the air, the show only had only 12 licensees. Now, there are more than 1,110 Simpsons items licensed worldwide. The products include sleepwear, PC screen savers, electric calendars, video

games, bubble baths, boxer shorts, cake pans, cookie cutters, golf balls, pacifiers, welcome mats and trading cards. Some of the items can be worn, some displayed, some used and some consumed. By the one hundredth episode of the television show, over \$3 billion worth of Simpsons merchandise had been sold worldwide.

Similarly, MTV is making millions on international sales of licensed products from *Beavis and Butt-Head Show* to the show's international audience of teenagers and twentysomethings.

Last year, in the theatrical film arena, merchandising and licensing fees added \$5 to \$6 billion to film revenues worldwide. Some of 1995's most successful tie-ins were from animated films as *The Lion King*, *Aladdin* and *Pocahontas*; thus, not only did these film do well at the box office, but they also have created streams of licensing revenue as well.

Companies that produce animated films and TV shows realize the potential of licensing popular characters. Disney, Hanna Barbara, MTV, Nickelodeon, Film Roman,





**Mickey Mouse salt and pepper shakers.**

© The Walt Disney Company

Klasky Csupo, and Saban are all actively involved in licensing the rights to their characters.

Some animation studios hire other companies to license the rights to their characters. Others manage and control the creative and financial aspects of the licensing and merchandising process themselves. The typical licensing agreement is usually between a production company, as the owner of the rights to the character, and a manufacturer or distributor, which has the responsibility to produce and distribute the products.

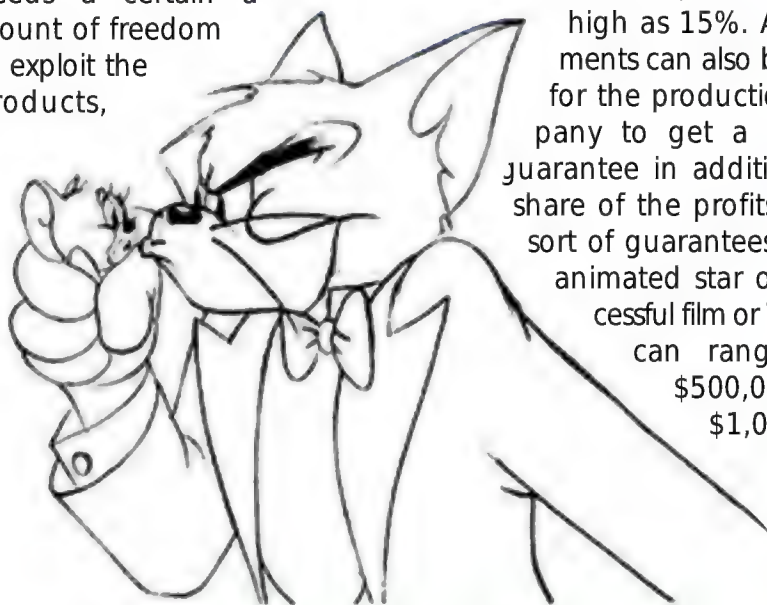
### Risks and Rewards

In negotiating a deal, the competing interests of both the production company and the manufacturer have to be taken into account. A producer naturally wants to earn as much as possible and will usually receive a percentage of the sales of the licensed products, while seeking to maintain certain controls over the type and quality of product created, so as to preserve their character's identity.

On the other hand, the manufacturer wants to earn a fair profit for taking the risk in creating and distributing the licensed products.

Seeing familiar friends  
in unfamiliar places  
makes the world a  
neighborly place.

In order to do this, it needs a certain amount of freedom to exploit the products,



Tom & Jerry (William Hanna, Joseph Barbera/MGM, 1940)

© MGM

with minimal control by the production company. A key consideration is the degree of risk the manufacturer incurs. After all, there is always the possibility that the market for the products will never materialize, perhaps as a result of the show's or film's lack of success. Ideally, a licensing agreement is a fair compromise between these competing objectives.

Most licensing and merchandising agreements are basically the same. The use of the character on a certain product is licensed for a specific amount of time for a specific territory. The license usually allows the manufacturer to manufacture, advertise, distribute and sell the products on an exclusive basis.

It is important that the agreement provide enough time for the manufacturer to effectively produce and distribute the products in question, which customarily ranges from 3-7 years. The production company commonly receives from 3-10% of the gross profits from the sales of the merchandise. However, in rare

instances, it can be as high as 15%. Arrangements can also be made for the production company to get a up-front guarantee in addition to a share of the profits. These sort of guarantees for the animated star of a successful film or TV show can range from \$500,000 up to \$1,000,000.



**Porky Pig (Friz Freleng/  
Warner Bros/1935)**

© Warner Bros.

A company that wants to license a character on the international market will want to make sure the manufacturer protects its copyrights and trademarks. This is done by putting the appropriate copyright and trademark notices on the products. To verify this, production companies approve artwork and samples of the finished product. This is also done to make sure the characters "goodwill" is not compromised.

When a merchandising licensing agreement expires, the rights to the character are usually returned to the producer, including all of the materials used to produce the merchandise.

Manufacturers are not the only businesses that realize the value of animated characters. Recently, McDonald's, the international fast-food giant, and the Disney announced a landmark cross-promotional agreement. The 10 year pact confirms how animated characters are being used by multinational corporations. The agreement, which kicks off on January 1, 1997, is worth \$1 billion! Disney originally started cross-promoting its animated

product with McDonald's in 1987 with the rerelease of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. However, for the past 5 years, Disney turned to another fast-food chain, Burger King, for its major cross-promotional efforts, including tie-ins for such films as *The Lion King*, *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

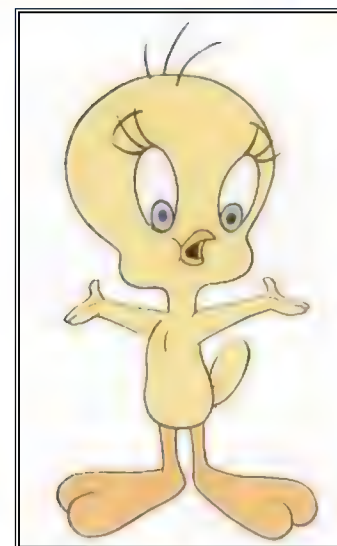
The global appeal of such characters as Mickey Mouse, Snoopy, Donald Duck, Fred Flintstone or Bart Simpson, tie the world together with a common language, that of laughter. Seeing familiar friends in unfamiliar places makes the world a neighborly place.

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A key consideration is the degree of risk the manufacturer incurs.

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As an art form, animation crosses all boundaries of language and geography. There are few areas in the entertainment industry that are



**Tweety (Bob Clampett/  
Warner Bros., 1942)**

© Warner Bros.

as well suited for international merchandising as that involving animated characters. So, remember, no matter what your native tongue, Garfield speaks your language.



**Fred Flintstone (Hanna-Barbera, 1960)**

© Hanna-Barbera

*Pam Schechter is an entertainment attorney in New York City. Her practice includes a special concentration in the animation industry. She represents several animators including Eric Fogel, the creator of the MTV animated series The Head and Beavis and Butt-Head animation director Yvette Kaplan.*



# FESTIVAL REVIEW

## Cardiff 96

by Bob Swain



Pictured left to right: Chuck Swenson, Laverne McKinnon (Hanna Barbera), and Igor Kovalyov (Klasky Csupo) at Cardiff.

Courtesy of Ron Diamond

The record number of delegates at this year's International Animation Festival in Cardiff enjoyed what was undoubtedly the strongest show ever staged there. The event has matured under Festival Director Fran Barlow to become much more than just a screening of the best in animation. Now including an exhibition, an excellent stream of seminars, networking opportunities and, above all, some great parties, the screenings were no longer the only reason to be in town. Despite justified criticism of some sections of the programming, the overall standard remained high. The Festival is now an essential meeting point for all those involved in the international animation industry. And following on from its success this year, it has been confirmed that it will take

place once again in Cardiff in 1998.

The Animation Expo was introduced for the first time at the Cardiff International Arena, combining exhibits of models and cels from recent productions with a trade exhibition. Although dominated by the recruitment efforts of Warner Bros and Disney, the trade show also attracted a lively mix of suppliers, producers and distributors.

### Cartoon Technology

In terms of cartoon technology, there were stands from Cambridge Animation Systems, Alias/Wavefront, Softimage, INA Toonbox, EOS Electronics and Avid. A lively area throughout the show, it was an innovation which is now guaranteed to play a larger role in future years. Apple

Computer also provided delegates with an Internet cafe.

Two popular sessions were the keynote speech by Scott Ross of Digital Domain and the inaugural academic lecture by Dr. Paul Wells of the De Montfort University in Leicester ("Tex Avery to Nick Park from an Educational Perspective"). Seminar highlights included a special session on scriptwriting for animation and a look at the difficult road to making it in the American market.

A strong program of technology seminars included a first class guide to evolving opportunities for animators in the multimedia market, chaired by *Cuts* editor George Jarrett, and a comprehensive session on animating the net. But the one session which provided the central focus for the animation community was the first ever Animo Users Group.

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With the days of real paint strictly limited in the industry, everyone knows they now need to address the new opportunities of digital

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With the days of real paint strictly limited in the industry, everyone knows they now need to address the new opportunities of digital production techniques. And with Animo proving to be far and away the most popular computer





**Nick Park of Aardman Animations at Cardiff.**

Courtesy of Ron Diamond

system for 2-D animation, it was a great opportunity to hear just how a range of existing users had been using it already.

More than 500 Animo systems have already been sold around the world—including 100 to DreamWorks, 120 to Warner Bros and further major sales to Nelvana and DIC. Contracts are currently under negotiation with Disney for what is likely to be the biggest deal so far.

The biggest user in Britain is Telemagination, where 9 machines are used on the studio's own productions and are also offered as a facility service to other producers. Current users include Honeycombe Animation, Snowden Fine and Bermuda Shorts—which is producing Channel 4's new 13-part series of Candy Guard's *Pond Life* on the studio's Animos.

DreamWorks' head of technology, Dylan Kohler, explained how Animo is being integrated into the company's new digital studio,

alongside production of its first animated feature film, *Prince of Egypt*. He joined DreamWorks after working on the original CAPS project at Disney and then helping Warner Bros set up its digital production facilities.

"DreamWorks was founded one-and-a-half years ago by Stephen Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen. It is the first Hollywood studio to be founded in decades so it presented a unique opportunity to set up something different," says Kohler.

"Part of the freedom came from having no legacy, no resources that we had to draw on, being able to rethink everything. At my first meeting with Jeffrey and Stephen they were talking about making films in New York and cutting in L.A. That is still pretty cutting edge stuff. At DreamWorks we are trying to build what the hype tells you is the digital studio of the 21st century. In fact, that is pretty much true."

"Most of the initial effort is going into feature animation simply because this is one of the most analyzed and compartmentalized

aspects of film making. For 50 years people have been working on how to make the whole system work better using traditional technology. That makes it all the

Part of the freedom came from having no legacy, no resources that we had to draw on, being able to rethink everything.

easier to make the transition to the digital world.

"We dedicated ourselves to deciding what was necessary for the filmmakers rather than just developing the tools themselves. There is always a danger of getting carried away and building tools that do little things. You need to concentrate on creativity," he says.

"So we allied ourselves with partners we would need to develop the components. We partnered early on with Silicon Studio and set out to define what the studio would require. We also partnered with IBM and Cambridge for the



**Pictured left to right: Karen Schmidt (Warner Bros), Heather Kenyon (Hanna-Barbera), Phil Roman (Film Roman), Dave Master, Tom Knott, and Max Howard (all three from Warner Bros.) at the Warner Bros. Feature Animation party.**

Courtesy of Ron Diamond



elements. Also Avid and Alias/Wavefront.

"The network should be able

If you are a producer trying to raise a crew for a smaller budget, it makes life very difficult.

to support all sorts of systems. We are starting with feature animation but some of the key components will have to be of use in the other divisions. One of the fundamentals is the asset management system. This is a huge database covering every digital piece that goes into your film—a sound file, a cel, a palette. That means we will be able to go back to *Prince of Egypt* as a historical record. We could even go back and use the elements of it in things like an interactive game. "We are working with Animo in development. Animo shares the distributed workstation approach that we have. Each workstation can run the same software—both Intel machines and Silicon Graphics. What that means to us is that we can have workstations on their own but also drafted in to work together.

"For a larger studio like us, we want to have things on different platforms. Very often certain software is available on just one platform or another so it is nice to have a mix of systems. I think that the world is changing and that it is best to focus on software first and foremost and hardware as you choose.

"Cambridge has also done a grand job in respect to the studio's desire for openness.

We are also interested in using its vector package but we think this will have a lot more use in effects animation. At the moment we are concentrating a lot more on the front end of the process." One of the most significant developments for this year's Festival was the presence of such a large number of visitors from American studios. Warner Bros. and Disney were both there in force in order to feed their new studios in London and Paris respectively.

### The Changing Landscape

Feature animation is in high demand and there are a very limited number of artists who can produce the quality of work. Opening in Europe is one way of working with great animation tal-

ent," says Roy Conli, head of Disney's Paris studio and co-producer of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Although they are both bringing major production work to Europe and providing fresh employment prospects for European animators, many independent producers fear the process could damage the industry by creating a talent shortage and forcing up the rate for the job. "We are all having problems either losing staff or having to pay more," says Jerry Hibbert of Hibbert Ralph Animation and chair of the Guild of British Animation.

"There is an upside in that British animators are getting lots of money and experience. But if you are a producer trying to raise a crew for a smaller budget, it makes life very difficult."

But the smaller American independents also made the trip to Cardiff, many of them hoping to develop relationships with partner companies in Europe. With the changing US market making life increasingly difficult for independents, they are now keenly eyeing Europe for their expansion plans. Few European animation studios have so far made any kind of real impact in the American market. But at the same time many producers in Europe are now looking to see if they can carve out a slice of that very tough American pie. The Festival featured a session devoted to cracking the American market but the Europeans soon discovered that transatlantic cooperation was the recipe of the day.

"The landscape in the US has changed so much in the past few years with vertical



Arthur Sheriff (Aardman Animations Publicist) and unidentified at the "iced" Vodka shot ice sculpture. Those who participated received a 20th Anniversary Aardman T-shirt.

Courtesy of Ron Diamond



integration, forcing all of us to think of new ways to find a way in," says Nina Hahn from Sunbow Entertainment in New York. "It is all about thinking globally, which really is a first for the creative industry. It is like making a quilt, with all kinds of people playing their part. No market should operate to the detriment of any other."

Joint developments are the way forward, according to Phil Roman of leading American independent Film Roman. "If a European producer works with an established US producer, it is a lot easier because there is a level of comfort for the Network to work with a producer who has already delivered for them," he says.

One European producer who has been working for the past three years at getting European co-productions off the ground in the US is Jorge Iglesias of Spanish company AKA. He has been developing Mondo Logo with a team of American writers.

"The key in the US market is credibility. You have to have a long-term perspective and you have to have your eyes wide open to reach the talent," he says.

### East European Developments

It is still a very difficult path for European producers. I think that the idea of partnerships with US producers is the most obvious perspective. But it is also important to consider a global perspective. It could be more important to develop European co-productions and to develop credibility within Europe



TVC's John Coates at the Aardman 20th Anniversary celebration party after an "iced" vodka shot.

Courtesy of Ron Diamond

and then in the long-term to look for a US deal. There is a lot to be learned by going there but it takes a long time." The Festival managed to face East as well as West, with a focus on several Russian and Eastern European studios within its international programming. Co-production with the West is of growing importance to them, with Britain's S4C in particular continuing to make heavy use of their talents. Its latest series, *The Bible*, is due to go on air soon, *Faiths of the World* is now in production and a series of *Epic Tales* is in development.

Varga Studios from Hungary and Pilot, Second Frog and Sverdlovsk from Russia were all had special programs featured in the Festival screenings. Pilot Moscow Animation Studio was the first private animation company to be set up in Russia. It has produced many original shorts since it began in 1988, with an animation school set up at the studio in 1990 and a New Screen Technologies School in 1994.

The Second Frog Animation Group was established within Pilot in 1991 to distribute and market material being produced by ani-

maters in Russia outside of Moscow — including the Sverdlovsk Film Studio in Yekaterinburg. Two of these films have since been nominated for Academy Awards—*Korova* in 1990 and *Gagarin* earlier this year.

In Hungary, Varga was the first studio to be set up outside the state system. Since 1989 it has grown to a permanent staff of 50 animators from Hungary, Russia

and Eastern Europe.

"We started out as a service company. We learned a lot from other directors and tried to understand what the market wanted internationally and tried to develop projects. Now we are looking for co-productions. Our main aim is to get out into the international market with our own projects," says director Entrees Erkel.

The first original project, with publisher Dorling Kindersley, began last year and *The Tales of Brer Rabbit*, a co-production with Clear Idea, starts this summer. In the meantime, the studio has also been working on four programs for S4C, and on *The Willows In Winter* and *Wolves, Witches and Giants* for TVC and Honeycomb Animation.

*Bob Swain, who lives in Brighton, England, is a scriptwriter and journalist, who specializes in animation, computer graphics and special effects. This article first appeared in July issue of the British magazine, Cuts.*





# FESTIVAL REVIEW

## Zagreb 96

by Maureen Furniss

**T**he 12th World Festival of Animated Films was held June 10-14, 1996 in Zagreb, where artists, journalists and lovers of animation from around the world gathered to watch more than 50 films representing the best in international animation. Although it is only one in a growing number of important international animation events, Zagreb is unique among festivals for several reasons. Most importantly, it represents not only the proud heritage of Croatia's famed Zagreb School of animation, but also a significant political and cultural institution for the emerging democratic Croatian society. Indeed, one finds that in Croatia, the celebration of animation is accorded a degree of respect that is found in few, if any, other countries.

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Most importantly, the festival represents not only the proud heritage of Croatia's famed Zagreb School of animation, but also a significant political and cultural institution for the emerging democratic Croatian society.

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Although the news media tends to focus on the unrest experienced in Croatia and its neighboring countries of the former



Janet Pearlman and Maureen Furniss posing around at Zagreb.  
Courtesy of Maureen Furniss

Yugoslavia, the look and feel of Zagreb—from a visitor's view point, at least—is far from turbulent. The political situation there may be far from settled, but the festival planners, Josko Marusic, Margit-Buba Antauer and Iva Stipetic, did a great job in presenting their guests with the many natural beauties and local entertainments found in Zagreb and its vicinity. Though certainly one does not wish to forget the difficulties that Croatia is now experiencing, it is wonderful to be able to appreciate the many good things the city has to offer.

Throughout the five days of the festival, there were opportunities to see many different aspects of Zagreb. Many events were held on the outskirts of the city, at

Lisinski Hall, which housed the screenings, many of the related art exhibitions, and Internet facilities connecting the festival to other cities in Croatia and throughout the world. Parties were held in the center of town, at the Euro-disco After Eight Club and at a site near the National Theater. This year's picnic was held at a lovely site on Medvednica Mountain. Many festival-goers chose to eat in the oldest part of the city, with architecture dating from the 11th century. The narrow streets in that section of town are lined with rows of café tables, where evening guests linger, drinking coffee, wine, and beer, speaking various languages (though English always seemed to be welcome), creating



the kind of atmosphere that truly can only be found in Europe. Posters in the street announce Zagreb's many cultural events, ranging from gallery openings to dance performances and a range of musical events, from classical to underground. Prices for food and beverages are reasonable by American standards, so a night of dining in the old town turned out to be affordable as well as fun. My first night in the city, I walked through this section of town for some time, trying to counteract the effects of a long plane ride and a 10 hour time difference. Many attractive young women were poised at tables and apparently eager to flirt with my two male companions, who shall remain nameless as they both have girlfriends.

At times, the atmosphere of the festival was decidedly more business-like. On more than one occasion, government dignitaries welcomed festival guests with receptions and small-group meetings. Certainly, the biggest event of this type was one involving Croatian President, Franjo Tudjman, Program Director Josko Marusi, and several attendees. Canada's Ambassador invited Canadian festivalgoers to dine with him, including Chris Robinson (Director of the Ottawa Festival), Caroline Leaf (recipient of the festival's Lifetime Achievement Award) and animator Janet Perlman. All festival guests were invited to the residence of the city's mayor, a gesture that served to underscore the importance of animation as an aspect of Zagreb's cultural heritage. The festival is viewed as being



John Dilworth and Niko Meulemans  
at the Zagreb Festival Picnic.

Courtesy of Maureen Furniss

important in part because of its role in bringing an international spotlight on the city.

For me, the diplomatic components of the festival are among the most interesting. A discussion of politics was never far from the surface of things. In most cases, it seemed that everyone felt relatively free to voice their discontent with the slowness of change and, overall, I sensed less optimism than I felt two years ago on my first visit to Zagreb. Another change I sensed was an increasing American presence in the city itself, which I viewed with some disdain. Store windows carried an unsettling amount of Disney merchandise and the golden arches of MacDonald's could be seen plastered on posters throughout the city.

Fortunately, the festival still retains a strong sense of tradition

in its programming and entertainment. For almost 75 years, animation has been produced in Croatia, with its famed Zagreb Film studio (started as Duga Film) celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. A special program, "40 Years of the Zagreb Film Animation Studio," spotlighted films made for children. Included were films from the *Professor Baltazar* series, as well as a number of other short works by Zlatko Grgic, Boris Kolar, Ante Zaninovic, Dragutin Vunak, and Borivoj Povernikovic. Two Zagreb animators were honored with gallery showings of their artwork in various media: Vunak's exhibition focused primarily on works of the past 3 years, while the professional opus of work by Dovnikovic, better known as Bordo, was presented in a showing of his illustrations, comics, and graphic designs from the past 46 years. A retrospective of Macedonian films included 13 short works produced between 1971 and 1989.

### Special Programs

Along with more local production, the animations of other countries also were featured in special programs. Five programs of British productions, curated by Pat Raine Webb, covered works from throughout its animation history, while recent American work was the focus of Warner Bros., MTV, Hanna-Barbera and Disney programs. A more marginalized group of artists were featured in a four-day program, "Articulated Light: The Emergence of Abstract Film in America."

Among the other highlights



was the presentation of the Life Achievement Award to Caroline Leaf, who is best known for her sand, oil on glass, and scratched animation created during her 20 years at the National Film Board of Canada and elsewhere. Australian film scholar and artist Erik Roberts organized a retrospective screening of Leaf's films, including *The Owl Who Married a Goose* (1974), *The Street* (1976), *Interview* (1979), *A Dog's Tale* (1986), and *Entre Deux Soeurs* (Two Sisters, 1990). Later in the week, Leaf and a small group of festival attendees gathered for an informal chat as part of a series entitled "Conversations with the Masters," a regular event at Zagreb that allows 10 to 15 people to get better acquainted with an honored artist. As a special tribute to Leaf, several artists collaborated on a short film entitled *Leave a Normal Life*, which made its debut at the festival. The film includes visual and aural segments created by Janet Perlman, Derek Lamb, George Griffin and Leaf's other close friends, and features a soundtrack by Peter Gabriel.

### Online & Other Judging

Several programs were dedicated to new technologies and their role in the realm of animation. Playing a major role in the festival was the Croatian Academic and Research Network (CARNet), which used the latest technologies to provide access to the festival to World Wide Web users across the planet. I find it fascinating to see how Croatia has



Bretislav Pojar and Gunnar Strøm at Zagreb.

Courtesy of Maureen Furniss

embraced the Internet to create a stronger international presence for itself. At one time, the government provided Internet access to its citizens free of charge and many thousands of people made use of public facilities. Now commercial providers have begun service within the country, which changed the nature of the Internet access. Nonetheless, thousands of Croats and other individuals were able to get detailed information about the festival. By accessing the Zagreb Festival's home page, a viewer could see brief clips of all the films in competition and vote for his or her favorite work. The winner of the Internet competition was Nick Park's *A Close Shave* (1995). You can see the Zagreb festival's home page at <http://www.awn.com> or [fest.hr.](http://anima-</a></p>
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Because I will be serving on my first selection committee (for the Ottawa Festival) in a couple of weeks, I was particularly interested in the dynamics of the competition. The Zagreb Festival's selection committee included Gunnar Strøm of Norway, Jill McGreal of the United Kingdom and Ivan Ladislav Galeta of Croatia. The committee selected more than 50 films from 472 submissions and, it seems, there was generally consensus on what works made it into the competition. When questioned about one or two films, committee members did indicate that political reasons necessitated the inclusion of works that otherwise might not have been chosen. With these exceptions, the quality of work submitted was of the

same general standard that one sees at most festivals. I often hear the comment that there has not been a real stand-out lately, though Priit Pärn and Janno Poldma's *1895*, which won the Grand Prize, seems to have been generally viewed as most worthy of the honor. The Public Prize went to American John Dilworth's crowd-pleaser, *Dirty Birdy* (1994) (his *Chicken from Outer Space*, which got an Oscar nomination earlier this year, and was included in the festival's Hanna-Barbera "What a Cartoon!" screening).

The festival jury was quite well rounded, including Derek Lamb, who has worked extensively in Canada, the United States and Europe, Erik Roberts of Australia, Dragutin Vanuk of Croatia, Marjut

Rimminen of Finland, who is working in London, and Bretislav Pojar of Czechoslovakia, who has worked internationally. I was pleased that the festival added a category for abstract films, which generally cannot compete with narrative films for recognition. Austrian Barbel Neubauer, who lives in Germany, won first prize in the category for her film, *Roots* (1995), for which she created images directly on film and an original score. Killian Dellers of Switzerland and Clive Walley of Wales shared second prize for their films, *Vision* (1995) and *Diver-timento No. 5—Slapstick* (1994), respectively.

In the regular categories, Best First Film was won by German Tyron Montgomery for *Quest* (1996), with second place shared by Kevin Richards of the UK for *Pariah the Red Man* (1994) and Piet Kroon of the Netherlands for *Dada* (1995). Best film in category A (30 seconds to 5 minutes) was won by Swiss animator Georges Schwitzgebel for *L'Anée du Daim* (1995), with second places given to Swiss animator Jonas Raeber for *Gruezi* (1995) and Canadian Christopher Hinton for *Watching TV* (1995). Best film in category B (5 minutes to 30 minutes) was won by Russian animator Oksana Tcherkassova for *Nyurkina Banja* (1995), with second prizes won by British artists Karen Kelly for *Stressed* (1994) and Peter Paar for *The Wooden Leg* (1994). Category C, for films produced on video, was won by Jan Otto Ertesvag of Norway for *Processor* (1995), with special recognition given to *The End* (1995) by Chris Landreth of Canada. A number of other prizes were also given out.

As in most recent festivals, ani-

mation from the United Kingdom had a strong presence. In recognition of the level of excellence found in many works from the UK, the award for Best Producer was given to the Arts Council of England.

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The city itself offers a relaxing experience with plenty of interesting historical and cultural spots to visit within a few minutes walk or taxi ride.

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It was somewhat surprising that a film as popular as Nick Park's *A Close Shave* was not awarded a prize by the jury. Prize winners represented a wide range of approaches in terms of form and content, which indicate a prioritization of experimentation over commercial formula and generally popular approaches. Two films that did not win prizes appealed to my interest in live-action/animation combination films and the surreal: *15th February* (1995) by the UK's Tim Webb and *Las Partes de mi que te aman son seres vacios* (The Parts of Me that Love You are Empty Beings, 1995) by Mercedes Gaspar of Spain. Both films use very dark humor in dealing with the subject of relationships, mixing pixillated human movement with object animation. Anyone who has been involved in an empty, meaningless relationship or who has been disillusioned by love (and I know there are some of you out there!) will find solace in these works.

Finally, I like to note the Zagreb Festival is a unique event that has provided some of my favorite animation-related experiences. With

what I would estimate to be between 100 and 200 official guests, the festival is small enough that you can get to know almost everyone in attendance. The city itself offers a relaxing experience with plenty of interesting historical and cultural spots to visit within a few minutes walk or taxi ride. One of my companions felt the festival was a bit dull for his tastes, preferring instead his more energetic partying experience at Cardiff and other festivals. Certainly, Zagreb does not offer the large-scale events of Annecy, Ottawa, or many other sites, but to be truthful I hope it never does.

Unfortunately, I am sure it is only a matter of time before the presence of Disney merchandise emerges from the shop windows to infiltrate the festival itself—along with the forces of other major animation studios—beyond the screenings that occurred in this time. Festival organizers spoke with me about trying to lure more participation by the larger studios, which apparently remain hesitant due to the local political situation and the festival's relatively small commercial potential at this point. I can understand the reasons for the festival wanting the support of such large corporations, which can provide funding that the Croatian government no longer can assure. Still, I am glad to have experienced the Zagreb festival as it is now.

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# FILM REVIEW

## The Hunchback of MTV?

by William Mortiz



Quasimodo atop the cathedral in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

© Walt Disney Pictures

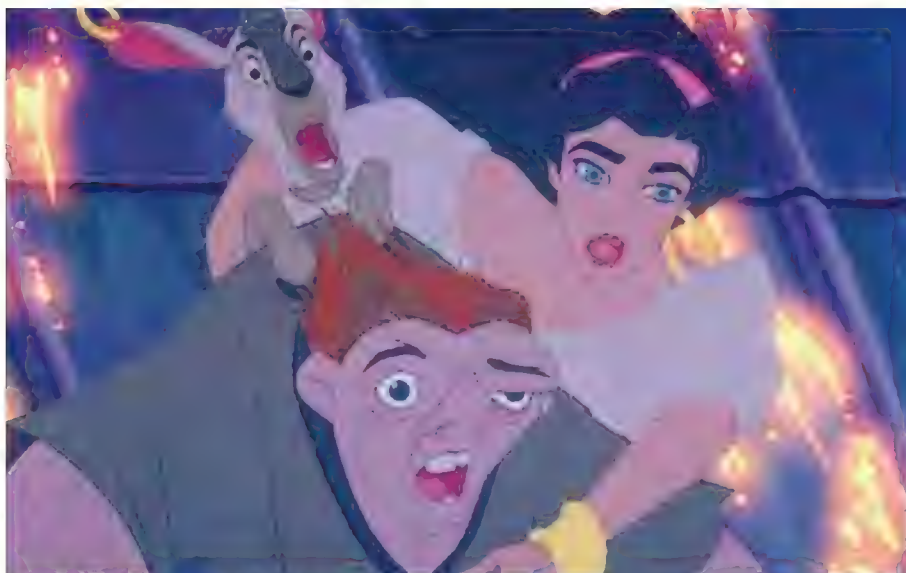
Max Fleischer's motto was "If it could be done with live action, it's not animation," and Dave Fleischer once griped to me about how many thousands of times he had to repeat that to the animators over the years to get them to improve their work with those imaginative, visionary impossibilities that belonged exclusively to the realm of creative animation. What would the poor Fleischer brothers think about the current animation scene, in which almost every animation studio is involved in duplicating live-action stories?

One can hardly help asking

that question about Disney's latest feature, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which has already been filmed several times as a live-action feature, in addition to Franz Schmidt's operatic treatment (which supplied some of the music for the Alfred Newman score to William Dieterle's splendid 1939 version). The answer, however, is that Disney has managed to make a wonderful movie out of *Hunchback* (with one hideous blemish, which we'll come back to later), a film so moving and thrilling and inspiring that it doesn't matter whether it's live-action or ani-

mation. It's just a good movie.

The adaptation of the story, credited to *Gorillas in the Mist* screenwriter Tab Murphy, cleverly eliminated some of the complexities of Victor Hugo's storyline, carefully sidestepping the brothels, tortures and philosophical intricacies (the two heroes, one poet and one warrior, are condensed to one sensitive soldier) and other aspects of the original which would have been unsuitable for younger viewers. Making Clopin a narrator/master-of-ceremonies was also an excellent idea that allows the basically adult story to become an excellent childrens' adventure tale.



The rescue scene with Quasimodo and Esmeralda from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

© Walt Disney Pictures

### Of Dieterle Born

It must be noted that the adaptation is very much of Dieterle's *Hunchback* — in particular, Charles Laughton's boyish Quasimodo with his one lumpy eye is clearly the model, just as Sir Cedric Hardwicke's thin, pinched face inhabits the animated villain Frollo. But this doesn't really matter, because the Dieterle film is so fine, it amounts to good taste to imitate it, and in most cases the Disney version lives up to the high standard set by the earlier film. For example, the brilliant scene (not in Hugo, but created by Bruno Frank) in which Esmeralda enters Notre Dame for the first time, and prays to Mother of God to help her outcast people while the "devout Christians" pray for money, sex and glory, the Disney team have supplied a great musical number "God Help the Outcasts" with knockout color visuals, Esmeralda slowly walking through the shadows and light-shafts of the cathedral until she finally stands bathed in a mandala of light from one of the stained-glass rose windows.

Art director Dave Goetz, layout supervisor Ed Gherter and background/color artist Lisa Keene

### A genuine woman of color, intelligent and capable.

deserve special credit for creating and sustaining a medieval atmosphere, and a clear sense of the antithesis between the sacred and profane which lies at the heart of

the story. Key staff visited Paris to study the real Notre Dame cathedral and Victor Hugo's own sketches of the Paris he knew and imagined, while Disney's unit continued to provide authentic detail, and this all pays off superbly.

The musical score also helps support this respectful treatment of Victor Hugo's historical romance, with an almost operatic tone to the serious numbers (including real chants, and use of a hundred-year-old organ and a professional choir recorded in London). The orchestrator, Michael Starobin, also employed some genuine instruments of the late medieval period (such as hammered-dulcimer, gittern and shawm) to give the profane scenes an added sense of authenticity.

The computer-generated crowd scenes with an active cast of hundreds are duly impressive, the Feast of Fools full of lively whimsy, and the action-adventure scenes with chases and fights very exciting. The quite effective voice talents include Demi Moore as Esmeralda (in the animated visuals, by the way, a genuine woman of color, intelli-



The gargoyles (Hugo, Victor, Laverne) with Quasimodo and Esmeralda in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

© Walt Disney Pictures





**Frollo, narrator of  
The Hunchback of Notre Dame.**  
© Walt Disney Pictures

gent and capable), Kevin Kline as the blond-bearded soldier Phoebus, and Tom Hulse as Quasimodo. Hulse himself sings quite well his operatic aria "Out There", but Esmeralda's heart-rending aria "Outcasts" is supplied by a professional singer, Heidi Mollenhauer, whose voice timbre blends seamlessly with Demi Moore's speaking voice.

### Compounding the Kitsch

**W**hat a waste, what a shame, then, to find in the middle of a magnificent, splendid film a set of characters and a musical number so vulgar, so tasteless and so far removed from the medieval period that it completely spoils all the spellbinding adventure in this special atmosphere. I refer to the introduction of three gargoyle "comics," and their song "A Guy like You," which attempts to lure Quasimodo out of the cathedral by depicting a gambling casino (poker chips and roulette wheel) and a low-cut gowned torch-singer splayed across a bar piano. All of this takes

place in the cathedral of Notre Dame. If I were a good Catholic, I think I would be offended-indeed, if I were a good pagan, I would be offended, since the genuine historical gargoyles actually represent the spirits of the old pre-Christian religions, and are much more imaginative character. One of the gargoyles, Hugo, is particularly offensive, compounding the kitsch of Phil Silvers and the camp of Jim Carrey-totally obnoxious. In the official *The Making of The Hunchback of Notre Dame* documentary, producer Don Hahn calls Hugo "a crazy frat boy," but what is *Animal House* doing in medieval Paris? Where was Dave Fleischer when they needed him?

The official Disney press release calls these gargoyles "kind of the Disney mortar that holds the whole story together," but the effect is quite the opposite-it makes the carefully built magic of the bygone era crumble. Other official

statements identify this gargoyle episode as a link with the Disney tradition, and compare it to the pink elephant sequence in *Dumbo*. Certainly not the Walt Disney tradition, for there are no jalopy races (nor obnoxious creeps) in *Snow White*, nor telephone calls or airplanes in *Cinderella* or *Sleeping Beauty*. And the pink ele-

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Indeed, if I were a good pagan, I would be offended.

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phants are wholly integral to *Dumbo*'s contemporary circus ambience and the particular plot point of the accidentally inebriated heroes. I can see no real excuse for the "gargoylettes" in *Hunchback*, except as a bid for Broadway. Much of this same team was responsible for creating *Beauty and the Beast*, which is still running in its hit stage version. And the press release describes this "showstopping tune" as "in grand boulevardier style with a touch of



**Esmeralda and Phoebus in The Hunchback of Notre Dame.**  
© Walt Disney Pictures



Esmeralda greeting Quasimodo during the Festival of the Fools.

© Walt Disney Pictures

Broadway panache." If that was the case, it seems quite misguided to me, since the audience for Broadway shows is vastly different and more sophisticated than the very much younger audiences for Disney movies. The number should be cut from the film and saved for the Broadway version of *Hunchback*, when it would be eligible for a Tony as an original song.

In a mad hope that I could convince someone to cut the gargoyle number before *Hunchback* opened in movie theaters, I wrangled a phone interview with directors Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. They adamantly defended the gargoyle sequence, insisting that it was "deliberately anachronistic," and since gargoyles were fantastic creatures anyway, that seemed to give "a crazy license for them just to go nuts for a minute." Dramatically, they said, it also set Quasimodo up for the disappointment he was about to encounter in the next scene. They seemed peeved at my suggestion that the number might have been inspired by thoughts of a Broadway version, and said

Broadway was their last concern while working on a film, when their only care was making the best film possible. Why, I asked, did gargoyle Hugo have to be so obnoxious, since no one else in the film, even the villains, were really obnoxious? They said they believed Hugo was in a Disney tradition of "loudmouth sidekicks" of which they offered the examples of Baloo in *Jungle Book* and Jiminy Cricket in *Pinocchio*. Hugo reminds me more of Lampwick in *Pinocchio*, so much so that during the climactic (genuinely touching)

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Don't get mixed up with him; he hangs out with really bad friends.

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moment in *Hunchback*, when a little girl reaches out to touch Quasi, I felt like warning her, "Don't get mixed up with him; he hangs out with really bad friends." In any case, the directors suggested I wait until the film came out on video or laserdisc, and then I could just cut out or skip over the abominable gargoyle sequence.

I should have guessed by the way the gargoyles are being pushed in the print ads and other promotional materials that at some level "Disney" suffers from a real lack of confidence in the true excellence and virtues of their *Hunchback of Notre Dame*—even though the same team did produce a Best Picture Oscar nominee without any obnoxious anachronisms. Or is it just a triumph of an MTV era sensibility that doesn't shrink from snatching images and ideas from any source, and doesn't care if the mood and tempo changes completely every five minutes, with no unity or direction beyond the pleasure of the moment? In either case, it's sad, because without the gargoyles, Disney's *Hunchback of Notre Dame* would have been a great film; with the obnoxious anachronisms it becomes an average compromised committee-assembled piece of commercial mishmash. Too bad.

*William Mortiz teaches film and animation history at the California Institute of the Arts.*





# DESERT ISLAND SERIES

## The Olympiad of Animation

compiled by Frankie Kowalski

This time 'round, I reminisced with animators who produced short animated films for The Olympiad of Animation—Melinda Littlejohn (*Breath of Seth*), Raul Garcia (*Animarathon*), George Schwizgebel (*Hors-Jeu*), and Jonathan Amitay (*The Spirit of the Olympics*).

### Melinda Littlejohn's desert island picks...

I love the idea and energy behind the Olympiad of Animation. It built up to a wonderful frenzy of animators and artists descending upon Los Angeles from all over the planet. We closed a few bars and opened a few breakfast joints before it was over—alot of those people still remain my dearest friends and networks! I think the funniest thing that happened was when the sound track failed on a rather politically graphic European film and the animator kept yelling CONSPIRACY! (that guy went on to work for Disney—embracing the LA lifestyle wholeheartedly.)

1. *The Rainbow Bear* by Bill Melendez
2. *The Bead Game* by Ishu Patel
3. *Anything* by Oskar Fischinger
4. *The Ladykillers* by Alexander McKendrick
5. The first hour of *The Black Stallion* by Carroll Ballard (produced by Francis Ford Coppola)
6. *Anything* by Emory Hawkins (especially the candy monster in *Raggedy Ann & Andy*)
7. *Burden of Dreams* by Les Blank
8. *The Ghost of Rome* by Antonio Pietrangeli
9. *Anything* animated by Bill Littlejohn (especially Snoopy flying his dog house)
10. *All or Nothing* by Frédéric Back



Olympiad of Animation film, *Breath of Seth*  
by Melinda Littlejohn.

### Raul Garcia's picks...

When I was invited to participate in *The Olympics of Animation* I felt really honored and decided to make the most amazing animated film ever done—Hollywood here I go, ok back to reality. I ended up with the longest animated film that \$150 can buy. Two minutes and 12 seconds and a cast of animators worth of a feature film. Necessity is the mother of all inventions and having no money to produce the

film, I asked every friend working in animation to animate a scene. I shot the whole film by using the studio I worked at as an animator in the middle of the night and using leftover film and tails from my part-time job as a cameraman. When the film was finally finished, I had an opportunity to come to L.A. and present it. It was very exciting."

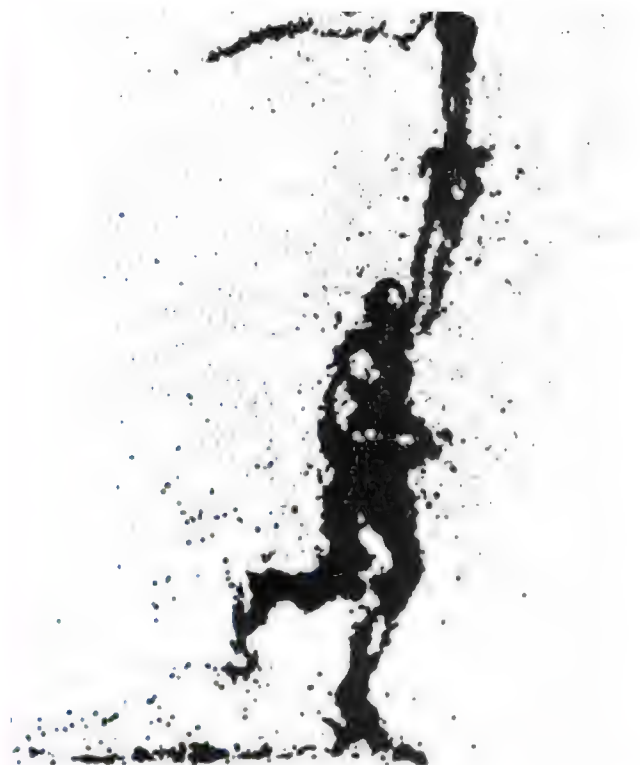
1. *The Tell Tale Heart* by Ted Parmelee
2. *Pas de deux* by Norman McLaren
3. *One Froggy Evening* by Chuck Jones
4. *Little Red Hot Riding Hood* by Tex Avery
5. *Anna & Bella* by Borge Ring
6. *Creature Comforts* by Nick Park
7. *What's Opera Doc* by Chuck Jones
8. *Getting Started* Richard Condie
9. *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Frédéric Back
10. *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick

## George Schwizgebel's picks...

Je ne pratique pas beaucoup de sport mais je suis impressionné par la beauté des mouvements des athlètes, les ombres portées et la couleur du gazon. C'est cela, et aussi l'idée naïve que l'on choisit toujours son équipe quand on regarde un match, qui m'a incité à réaliser *Hors-jeu*."

(I do not practice sport very much but I am impressed by the beauty of athletic movements, the shadows that they project and the lawn color. It is for this reason, and also because of the naïve idea that one always picks a team while watching a match, that I decided to make *Hors Jeu*.)

1. *Tango* by Zbigniew Rybcynski
2. *The Tale of Tales* by Yuri Norstein
3. *Damon the Mower* by George Dunning
4. *Le jeu des anges* by Walerian Borowczyk
5. *Dream of the Sphinx* by James Gore
6. *Refleksy* (Reflections) by Jerzy Kucia
7. *The Comb From the Museums of Sleep* by the Brothers Quay
8. *Creature Comforts* by Nick Park
9. *Blinkity Blank* by Norman MacLaren
10. *The Passing* by Bill Viola



## Jonathan Amitay's picks...

*Spirit of the Olympics* ... wow! 1984. And it was my first film to be shown internationally. I had no idea of the importance of such events. While making the film for the Olympics I used sand and shot the film with a very old animation camera that was on its last sprockety legs. It would jam, oh would it ever jam, and mostly on the most important jobs. By the time I'd finish almost ANY job with that camera, all I was left with was the feeling of relief of having managed to make the deadline. Other than that I was too frazzled to think about anything else. Even today I find it difficult to watch my works from that period seeing the jump-cuts and remembering that dreaded 'click,' and then opening the camera body and the film spilling out like bloody spaghetti!"

1. *The Mighty River* by Frédéric Back, for its awe some beauty and grand execution.
2. *The Street* by Caroline Leaf. What can I say ... it's so fantastically imaginative.
3. *The Yellow Submarine* by George Dunning
4. *Ivan The Terrible* by Sergei Eisenstein. A grandiose film and you don't have to understand a word of Russian to be mesmerized by it. It's like "watching" a Rembrandt, a J.S. Bach or a Beethoven.
5. *Seven* by David Fincher — its opening title which I found to be a unique piece of artistry and "branded itself" on my artistic psyche.
6. *The Electric Blanket* by Asi Dayan, which is gut stuff and Israeli to its last frame, and contains a controversial and unforgettable scene about dying and death.
7. *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* by Mark Achbar. A film that will leave no doubts in the minds of the mad dogs on the island (and even islands have their mad dogs) as to my political/social leanings.
8. *Unconscious Civilization* by John Ralston Saul, which is a piece of the most brilliant reasoning.
9. For music ... There's so much ...! On the spur of the moment I would probably grab any one of Mozart's piano concertos. His "Heavenly" music contains every possible human emotion.
10. I must admit that I would take one of my own films, *Nukie Takes A Valium* to remind myself that I'm not as lousy as I make myself to be sometimes ... ha ha.





# NEWS

## Virgil Ross - In Memory

by Tom Sito

**M**aster animator Virgil Ross died on May 15, 1996 from complications of a stroke suffered in March. He was 88. His 60 year career began in 1930 at Mintz-Screen Gems, where he was hired as a trainee for \$6 a week. Tex Avery made him an animator at Lantz in 1935, and Ross then followed Avery over to Schlesinger's (Warner Bros.) six months later. He became one of the legends of his profession, working at Ub Iwerks, Hanna Barbera, Filmation, DePatie-Freleng, Chuck Jones, Sam Nicholson and Marvel.

In 1984 he was one of the first artists to receive the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Golden Award and in 1988 was honored with ASIFA-Hollywood's Winsor McCay Award for Lifetime Achievement. Virgil was the dance specialist. Thus, whenever Bugs Bunny tap-danced

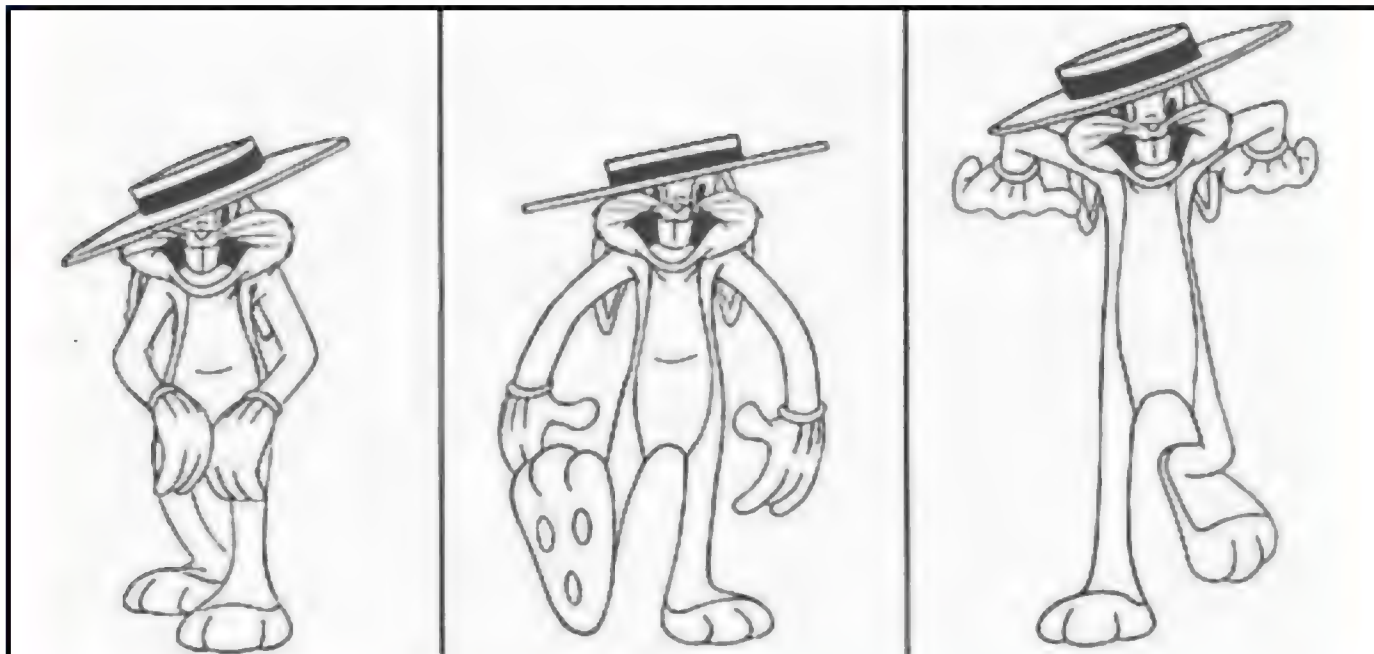


Virgil Ross (left) with animator Warren Batchelder in 1945, from *That's All Folks* by Steve Schneider.

down the street to "Rosie O'Grady" or cakewalked on the vaudeville circuit, even pausing to wrestle a Japanese Sumo wrestler, that was Virgil's work (he was a darn good dancer himself). A virtuoso of timing and gesture, he animated a great deal of Friz Freleng's *Rhapsody Rabbit*; his other credits include Tex Avery's *Daffy Duck and Egghead*, Freleng's *A Hare Grows in Manhattan* and *I Taw a Putty Tat*.

Virgil was generous with his time for young fans. While some animators at his age withdraw into solitude, he made himself available for numerous events, where, surrounded by people, he would sign autographs and do drawings. And he was never too busy to talk to people.

At the end, he was in his room, propped up in his bed, looking out at his beloved garden, surrounded



Animation drawings by Virgil Ross from *Mississippi Hare* (1949).

© Warner Bros.



by hundreds of get well cards and drawings sent by all those he made memories for.

So, as long as there are people who break into a smile at the antics of Bugs and Daffy, Virgil Ross' memory will live on.

### **New Line Television Syndicates The Mask.**

In an effort to strategically market the CBS #1 rated Saturday morning series *The Mask*, the series will be stripped Monday through Friday beginning this September in addition to its weekly CBS network broadcast. The show is based on the original feature film of the same name from New Line Cinema. The series is produced by New Line Television and Film Roman (*The Simpsons*, *Garfield*).

### **DreamWorks Lights Fire Under Ash.**

DreamWorks has acquired the feature film rights to Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti's new comic book hero, *Ash*, in which the company is targeting as a franchise for its animation unit. *Ash* tells the story of a firefighter who miraculously survives a blazing inferno and comes to realize he was spared by a force from the future that has given him extraordinary powers. It will be adapted for the screen by Rand Ravich.

### **DreamWorks And Pacific Data Images' First Project In The Works.**

The film, *Ants*, will be produced by Eron Warner, Brad Lewis and Patty Wooten through PDI. Though specific details of the story line are being kept under the wraps, *Ants* is described as a computer-generated animated feature similar in process to *Toy Story*. Warner, who

is currently a Senior VP of Physical Production at Fox, is negotiating out of his contract to work on *Ants*.



**The Mask.**

© New Line Productions

### **Little Orphan Annie Finds A Home In TV.**

One of the most popular strips in comic art annals, *Annie* is being recast as a new, contemporary character in an animated, action-adventure series. Now in development, the weekly, half hour show will be co-produced by Abrams/Gentile Entertainment (*Sky Dancers* and *Dragon Flyz*) and the Fremantle Corporation (international distributor for such shows as *Grace Under Fire* and *3rd Rock From the Sun*).

### **Disney Campaigns With McDonald's and General Mills For Aladdin Video.**

Buena Vista Home Video is putting theatrical style promotion behind its direct-to-video premiere of

*Aladdin and the King of Thieves*, which features the voice of Robin Williams as Genie. The co-promotion with McDonald's and General Mills is valued at \$70 million.

### **Festival Note: Sarah Watt**

just won the Special Achievement Award for Animation at the San Diego Film Festival for her film, *Small Treasures*.

### **The following items are from AWM's June 7, 1996 Email News Flash**

### **Colossal Pictures Files For Chapter 11 Bankruptcy.**

The troubled San Francisco-based studio, known for such TV shows as *Aeon Flux* and *Liquid Television*, has sought protection from its creditors while seeking to overhaul its operations. Previously, it had stopped producing TV commercials, despite being one of the top studios in the field and announced that it was concentrating on devel-



opment projects. The company said that the latest move will allow it "to reorganize its business in a profitable direction." Part of the reorganization involves a shakeup of its management team. Thus, Chairman and co-founder Drew Takahashi is said to be "refocusing his efforts as Colossal's Chief Creative Director"; in addition, Jan Bauman, previously Controller at Pixar, has been appointed Chief Financial Officer; and former Pacific Data Images Executive Producer, Jana Canellos, is Director of Sales and Marketing.

### **Buena Vista Home Video Releases In Indonesia.**

Walt Disney home video will be released legitimately in Indonesia starting next month with PT Vision Interprima Pictures. Indonesia was off limits to the U.S. majors until last year. The market was 100% pirated until 1991, when the government cleared the shelves of video stores and burned stacks of cassettes. After that, the business consisted largely of imported laserdiscs. The first package contains the animated feature *The Goofy Movie* and Disney indicated it will start dubbing *Pocahontas* for sell through, once it has been able to cast suitable voice-over talent.

### **Trial Date Set For Betty Boop Cartoon Copyright.**

Harvey Entertainment sued Fleischer Studios and its attorney Stanley Handman, charging that they failed to pay Harvey royalties for the use of Betty Boop. Harvey seeks to void a 1980 agreement that gave Fleischer the rights to the cartoon character in return for managing them and paying

Harvey 10% of the profits. Harvey further charges fraud, breach of contract and copyright infringement. Court date is set for December 3rd, 1996.

### **New Line Cinema Selects Screenplay For Cross, A Dark Horse Comic Book.**

New Line has added *Cross* to the list of comics being developed into features due to the drive of acknowledged comics fanatic Michael De Luca. Other projects include, *Avengelyne*, *Blade*, and *Spawn*. The studio's last hit *The Mask* which grossed more than \$300 million worldwide, was also based on a comic. *Cross* which is based on an unpublished novel by Andrew Vachss and James Colbert called *Cross Genesis*, is about a family of misfit mercenaries and childhood friends who fight urban crime.



### **John Canemaker Has Three Animation Books For Fall Release.**

John Canemaker will have three books dealing with the art and history of animation published later this year; *Before the Animation Begins: The Art and Lives of Disney Inspiration Sketch Artists* (Hyperion Books) chronicles,

the lives and work of Disney concept artists from the thirties to the present; *Tex Avery* (Turner Publishing) presents a candid assessment of the innovative animation director during his work at MGM Studios from 1942-1955; and *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat* (Da Capo Press), which is a paperback reissue of Canemaker's 1991 account of pre-Disney animation as seen through the most popular silent cartoon character of the 1920s. Canemaker, who heads the animation program at New York University, is also an accomplished filmmaker and frequent lecturer on the art and artists of animation.

### **Film Roman To Produce Richie Rich TV Series In Association With Harvey Entertainment.**

The 13 half-hour series will be syndicated by Claster Television. Film Roman will be producing new shorts for each episode, which will also feature films from the Harvey library. This is a similar strategy Harvey followed in their popular *Baby Huey Show*. Richie Rich, known as "the richest kid in the world," is, of course, a popular comic book star and recently was the basis of a live-action feature starring McCauley Culkin.

### **Steven Spielberg To Produce Dramatic Animated Series For The WB Network.**

The fledgling network announced that it will be adding *Invasion America*, a new prime time animated serial to its schedule. The show is the maiden effort from DreamWorks's new television animation division, in which Spielberg is closely involved with.



WB programming head Garth Ancier described the show as, "an animated dramatic series with theatrical scope and primetime quality."

### **Invision Entertainment Joins Production Team Of Sandbox Entertainment On Pillow People.**

InVision, the new startup company that recently took over production of USA Network's popular *Street Fighters* show, announced that it will be working closely with BananaMation, Sandbox's newly formed animation subsidiary. The project will use traditional cel animation (provided by Invision) as well as 3-D computer animation (by BananaMation). The series will debut nationally in syndication in September 1996.

### **Casemiro To Head Creative Affairs At Klasky Csupo, Inc.**

Eryk Casemiro comes to Klasky Csupo following his work at Broadway Video as Director of Creative Affairs, where he participated in the development of *Wayne's World* and produced the CBS holiday special *Frosty Returns* with renowned animator Bill Melendez. His responsibilities at Klasky Csupo will include managing development of television series, specials and special projects.

### **The following items are from AW M's June 21, 1996 Email News Flash:**

#### **Hahn Gets Animated Deal.**

Disney-based producer Don Hahn, who worked on *Beauty and the*

*Beast*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* and *The Lion King*, has entered into an exclusive seven year agreement with Walt Disney Feature Animation.. Hahn who has been associated with Disney for 20 years, produced the current animated musical *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Under terms of the new arrangement, he will continue to produce animated fare on an exclusive basis for the studio, but he will also venture into live-action or live-action/animation combos on a first look basis.

### **Pipkin Promoted To Vice President Of Production By Klasky Csupo.**

Margot Pipkin in her new role, will oversee the production of the company's TV series: *Rugrats*, *Duckman* and *Aaahh! Real Monsters*. Pipkin, who was previously producer on *Duckman*, will oversee budgeting, talent and studio relations with Paramount Television Group. Pipkin joined Klasky Csupo in 1987 as a producer of the prime time series *The Simpsons*.

### **Disney Pacts With Creative Capers.**

Disney Interactive has signed an exclusive multiyear deal with Creative Capers Entertainment, the Glendale-based animation and design studio. Capers principals Sue and Terry Shakespeare and David Molina have been associated with Disney on a number of film, TV and consumer products over the years. Under the pact with Disney's year-old interactive division, Creative Capers will continue to work on projects with other divisions at Disney.

### **Toy Story Distributed To Chinese Audience.**

Shanghai Film Studio will distribute Disney's *Toy Story* next month, making it the first Chinese film studio to distribute a foreign movie. China has decided to allow its studios to do so as a trial scheme to boost their coffers. Actual film imports are still controlled by the state-run China Film Import and Export Co. Disney's *Lion King* earned about 30 million yuan (\$3.6 million) at the Chinese box office.

### **Nickelodeon To Produce First In-House Project For Pre-schoolers.**

The cable network has made a 20-episode commitment for the computer animated *Blue's Clues*, a show in which an animated puppy helps solves the day's puzzles, with the help of host Steve Burns using non-verbal clues. It will be shown as part of the network's Nick Jr. Programming block, which is targeted to the 2-5 age group.

### **Comedy Central Makes Deal With Fox For The Tick.**

The agreement, which will include 10 new episodes, involves airing the shows on The Comedy Channel the day after they air on Fox Children's Network. The deal is the latest example of giving cable exposure to a series shortly after its broadcast run. While *The Tick* is a Saturday morning children's program, the takeoff on the cartoon superhero genre has a large young adult following, which Comedy Central believes can make an attraction in prime time.



# Animation World Magazine

## 1996-97 Calendar



With the Hiroshima Animation Festival on the horizon in August, we thought we would take the opportunity to take an extended look at Japanese animation, and anime in particular. Thus, our theme is "Anime, Anime, Anime—A Worldwide Phenomenon." We will lead off with an authoritative survey by Fred Patten, Mark Segall will profile Manga Entertainment (the leading international distributor of anime), and John Gosling will report in from the UK.



In addition, we will have an interview with Raoul Servais, who is being honored at Hiroshima, Mark Langer will report on Shanghai's Animation Fiesta, and Aaron Burger looks at the state of the (animation) art. Look for these and other items in the next issue available online on August 1, 1996.

International Television	(September)
Politics & Propaganda	(October)
Theme Park Animation	(November)
Interactive Animation	(December)
Animation Festivals	(January '97)
International Animation Industry	(February '97)
Children & Animation	(March '97)